

MIRS Capitol Capsule

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Budget Deadline Won't Stop Showdowns

Lawmakers would have until July 1 to put together the coming fiscal year's budget under a proposed Constitutional Amendment kicked around the House Appropriations Committee today, a move designed to let school districts and municipalities know how much they can expect before they are months into their own fiscal years.

Schools and cities grumbled last year when Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 budget discussions carried on past midnight Oct. 1, 2007, the official start of the FY '08 fiscal year. The protracted negotiations left entities that operate on a July 1-June 30 budget cycle in limbo.

But Republicans grumbled that the proposal, [HJR AA](#), wasn't going to erase the future threat of a government shutdown or all-night sessions.

"The only difference I see is that instead of missing a whole weekend of football locked in the chamber, we'd miss a couple baseball games," said Rep. Daniel [ACCIAVATTI](#) (R-Chesterfield Twp.).

The measure, introduced by Rep. Aldo [VAGNOZZI](#) (D-Farmington Hills), would amend the state constitution to mandate that all general appropriation bills for the succeeding fiscal period would be presented to the Governor on or before July 1 of each year.

Implementing the new deadline would not head off a repeat of last year's debacle, House Fiscal Agency (HFA) Director Mitch **BEAN** told the committee. Much of the hour-long discussion centered on last year's well-documented budget showdown and subsequent four-hour government shutdown (See "[Deal Shuts Down Shutdown](#)," 9/30/07).

Bean fielded questions from committee members dealing with the non-fiscal effects of the resolution. According to Bean, moving up the budget deadline from Sept. 30 to June 30 would leave plenty of time for the legislature to deliver a finished product. The measure does not include any requirements from the executive branch, nor does it include any penalties for failing to deliver a budget on time.

"If there were a downside — and that's a big if — it would be that you're setting more restrictions on yourself, when the executive branch won't be subject to them," Bean said.

Chair George [CUSHINGBERRY](#) (D-Detroit) promised to take up the resolution in the near future.