

Republican American

Pressure on governor, lawmakers to pass budget

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HARTFORD -- Health-care workers are already blaming the state budget stalemate for cutbacks at the Department of Developmental Services.

Uncertainty and alarm abounds in state government because Republican Gov. M. Jodi Rell and the Democratic-controlled legislature missed a June 3 deadline for adopting a new, two-year budget.

The breakdown in the budget talks only compounds these concerns. It was unclear Monday when direct negotiations would resume.

The Connecticut Association of Nonprofits is imploring state leaders to put their differences aside and reach a budget deal that spares safety-net programs.

The Connecticut Community Providers Association says the delay is putting many private agencies and their clients at substantial risk.

The lack of a budget also disappoints the Connecticut Business and Industry Association.

Without getting specific, the state's largest business group says Rell and lawmakers must cut spending and avoid tax increases that would further hurt the state economy and cost jobs.

Tax increases and spending cuts are the big hold-ups in the budget negotiations. Rell and Republicans want more spending cuts and won't talk tax increases. The Democrats want to discuss tax increases and spending cuts at the same time.

The Connecticut Arts Alliance says art, history, film and tourism are caught in a crossfire between the governor and the legislature's leadership and could become "political sacrificial lambs."

The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities is planning to keep pressing Rell and lawmakers on town aid during the next round of budget talks.

On Monday, House Majority Leader Denise W. Merrill, D-Mansfield, couldn't say when the negotiations would resume. She wasn't optimistic.

The legislature is in special session, but the House and Senate won't meet until a budget plan is ready for action.

If there is no agreement soon, Merrill said, Democrats will likely pass their own budget before the new fiscal year starts July 1. That decision could be made as early as next week.

"We can't just wait to continue to have a consensus budget," Merrill said.