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## Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland says temporary budgets are costly, hurt vulnerable citizens

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Columbus- State government is starting to crack along the seams as Ohio moves into the second week of temporary budgeting with costs reaching about \$14 million a week, Gov. Ted Strickland estimated Tuesday.

The Democratic governor said the budget impasse is hurting the state because federal matching money can't be drawn down and fee increases proposed for the next budget cannot take effect. (For example, nursing homes would be paying almost \$1 million a day more in franchise fees if Strickland's budget proposal had been enacted by lawmakers by the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1.)

In real terms, though, the standoff is hurting people, Strickland said.

"They may not be visible to us, we may not know their names, but there is unnecessary human deprivation and suffering taking place as a result of this budget impasse," he said during a news conference in his Statehouse office.

Strickland, who is reluctant to sign off on any more budget extensions beyond July 14, said he is considering using his executive power to call the legislature into session in an attempt to goose lawmakers into taking action.

Strickland and Republican Senate President Bill Harris have been bickering for more than two weeks over Strickland's plan to place slot machines at seven Ohio racetracks to raise \$933 million. Harris wants the plan to go before voters, and Strickland wants lawmakers to include it in the operating budget for 2010 and 2011.

Neither has budged, each blaming the other for the delay, and lawmakers have approved a pair of one-week interim budgets to keep state government afloat.

Both leaders agree the interim budgeting is harming the state. The temporary budgets give most state agencies only 70 percent of their funding from fiscal 2009, divided by 52 to get a weekly allotment.

The temporary budgets mean that county officials won't get quarterly checks from the state for local mental health services, which normally go out on July 10, according to state mental health department spokeswoman Trudy Sharp.

Sharp said the quarterly payment to Cuyahoga County last year was \$9.2 million, but the weekly budgeting makes it impossible to cut such big checks to county agencies.

That was news to Bill Denihan, head of the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County.

"If we don't get that \$9 million, it's going to be catastrophic for us," said Denihan. He was in Columbus Tuesday hoping to testify before a House panel about the impact of the budget cuts ordered so far by

legislative leaders and Strickland.

"We'll have to figure out what we can do to ensure our consumers are safe," Denihan said. "But those options are becoming nil when the foundation is treatment and medication, and when our funding evaporates like this, it really becomes the state hospital or prison."

Department of Job and Family Services officials said that a Medicaid consumer hot line has shut down because they do not have the money to maintain a new contract. Similarly, they have been unable to sign a contract to have private physicians and psychologists review disability cases when a nurse has been unable to approve them. Normally, they review about 890 cases a day, state officials said.

Agency Director Douglas Lumpkin said that counties are running into problems at different points, depending on how often they pay child care and foster care providers. By the end of this month, every county will face serious problems if the temporary budgeting continues, he said.

"As it continues to drag, the number of issues will grow and become more problematic," Lumpkin said.

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