

5 Tips for Influencing the State Budget

We need you! The importance of public engagement in setting federal and state priorities couldn't be more clear. The state budget, which will be debated by the governor and the Legislature in the next several months, is an important opportunity to have your voice heard. There is so much at stake for your community, including funding for local public schools, resources to ensure clean water, services for people with disabilities, public safety and resources to help parents find and keep jobs.

Gov. Rick Snyder will release his proposed 2018-19 budget in February. Here are five tips for making your voice heard:

1

MEET WITH YOUR STATE LEGISLATORS NOW. Let them know that you are watching the state budget unfold, and what matters to you as a constituent. Building an ongoing relationship with your legislators is critical because a last-minute letter or phone call may be too little, too late. Even if your legislators don't sit on the committees that appropriate funds, they will have a vote on the final budget and have relationships with appropriations committee members.

2

MAKE SURE YOU HAVE GOOD SOURCES OF TIMELY INFORMATION ABOUT THE ISSUES YOU CARE ABOUT. The League is monitoring the state budget and provides regular updates on important budget issues as well as opportunities for input. Legislative actions on the budget can happen quickly and in unpredictable ways, with meetings scheduled with relatively little notice and budget trade-offs made behind closed doors by a limited number of political leaders—many of whom do not represent large communities of color or families working in low-wage jobs. To be involved you must have timely information and we are here to help (www.mlpp.org).

3

RECOGNIZE YOUR EXPERTISE. State budgets can seem very technical and complex, but they boil down to a plan for spending available resources on the services that communities need and value. You are an expert in describing what your community, your families and your children need. Tell your story and exercise your power. Better yet, work with local organizations and coalitions to show a more unified position on your top issues.

4

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC TESTIMONY. After the governor releases his budget in February, legislative committees meet to craft their own spending plans. Appropriations subcommittees generally take public testimony during this time and want to hear from you. Budgets are ultimately approved by both the Michigan House of Representatives and the Michigan Senate, with differences worked out in joint House/Senate conference committees before being sent to the governor—usually by June.

5

DON'T FORGET THE GOVERNOR. In addition to proposing a budget each year, Michigan's governor has the power to veto portions of the budget passed by the Legislature, and negotiates with legislative leaders throughout the process. Let the governor know what you value.