

Minnesota Government Shutdown Update

July 06, 2011 by [John A. Knapp](#)

Governor Mark Dayton and legislative leaders are scheduled to sit down again this afternoon to continue negotiations on a State budget for the biennium which began almost a week ago. A one hour meeting yesterday, the first since the shutdown began on July 1, produced no progress and possibly some regression. While Republican legislative leaders had proposed various accounting shifts and one-time revenue streams to add \$1 billion to the State budget in the last negotiations on June 30, they came out of yesterday's meeting announcing that this additional revenue was now off the table and they would not agree to any budget spending more than \$34.2 billion. The legislators again suggested that Governor Dayton agree to a "lights on" bill which would keep government functioning at its current levels until agreement can be reached on an overall budget solution.

Meanwhile, smaller groups of legislators are attempting to work out the nuts and bolts of the spending bills, including some significant policy differences with the Governor. Today, a group of legislative negotiators is meeting to go over the Health and Human Services Appropriations Bill and tomorrow a group will meet on the K-12 education bill.

Even some of the State's senior public officials are getting involved. Yesterday, former Vice President Walter Mondale and former Governor Arne Carlson announced the formation of a "blue ribbon panel" composed of former State budget officials, legislators and business leaders to craft a budget compromise. While Governor Dayton encouraged the formation of the group, it is doubtful that Republican legislative leadership will be swayed by the panel's recommendations.

On the judicial front, former Minnesota Chief Justice Kathleen Blatz, the Special Master appointed by Ramsey County District Court Judge Kathleen Gearin, continues to entertain petitions from myriad interest groups affected by the shutdown. Justice Blatz will make recommendations to Judge Gearin, possibly as early as today, on whether certain State functions should operate during the shutdown.

On the political front, legislators were braced for vocal criticism as they participated in Fourth of July parades in their local communities. By some accounts, the criticism of legislators was surprisingly muted.

While budget negotiations could come together on a moment's notice, there are no signs that a quick resolution is likely. If anything, Governor Dayton and Republican legislators appear more committed to their positions than they were before the shutdown. A government shutdown of a month or more would not be surprising.