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City readies for Tower Square rally with governor

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MARION — The anticipated visit of Gov. Rod Blagojevich has prompted the announcement of traffic changes for Main Street, Market Street and the Tower Square for this Wednesday, April 4.

Commissioner Lannie Gribble announced at Monday night's City Council meeting that beginning at 2 p.m., parking would not be allowed on the east side of the square and the entire square would be closed off to vehicular traffic beginning at 4:30 p.m.

The outdoor rally is planned for the Square, but in case of rain, the Governor will appear at the Marion Cultural and Civic Center.

The Governor is scheduled to appear at 4:45 p.m. as he continues a four-day tour of Illinois rallying support for his "Investing in Families" program that he says will help provide access to affordable healthcare to all people in Illinois and dramatically increase funding for Illinois schools.

Julie Adkins, a representative from the Illinois Society for Advance Practice Nursing, will be speaking in favor of Gov. Blagojevich's health plan at the rally. The board of directors of ISAPN recently voted to support Gov. Blagojevich's plan.

The proposed budget includes the Illinois Covered plan to provide affordable comprehensive insurance to all Illinoisans, the Helping Kids Learn plan to invest an additional \$10 billion in Illinois schools over the next four years, the Tax Fairness Plan that requires big wealthy businesses to pay their fair share and gives the middle class the relief it deserves, and a plan to address the state's long-time pension deficit and ensure secure retirements for thousands of workers.

The Governor's Illinois Covered plan will ensure that all 1.4 million uninsured adults have access to quality, affordable healthcare, and will help many middle-income families and small businesses that are currently enrolled in health insurance plans save thousands a year on healthcare costs. The plan will also reform the existing healthcare system to improve quality and require more accountability.

Gov. Blagojevich's FY08 budget proposal includes fundamental changes that will benefit the people of Illinois for generations to come. The Governor's Illinois Covered plan will ensure that all 1.4 million uninsured adults have access to quality, affordable healthcare, and will help many middle-income families and small businesses that are currently enrolled in health insurance plans save thousands a year on healthcare costs. The plan will also reform the existing healthcare system to improve quality and require more accountability.

Recently, Gov. Blagojevich's plan received support from the Illinois Federation of Teachers and

the Illinois Education Association. Both groups, representing thousands of teachers and school staff throughout the state, are advocating the Helping Kids Learn plan to invest an unprecedented \$10 billion in schools over the next four years - nearly three times bigger than any increase in state history. For Illinois's deteriorating schools, the plan will invest more than \$1.5 billion in a capital construction plan for projects to improve and upgrade classrooms and schools. Under the plan, general state aid to schools will increase by more than \$800 million next year, raising the Foundation Level for each student by \$724 to \$6,058.

Other highlights of the Governor's plan for FY08 include:

- n An historic Tax Fairness Plan that closes corporate loopholes and gives the middle class the relief it deserves;

- n A record new investment of \$10 billion in schools over the next four years - nearly three times bigger than any increase in state history - and property tax relief for homeowners across the state;

- n "Illinois Covered," an affordable, reliable healthcare plan to cover the 1.4 million uninsured adults in Illinois and provide assistance to millions of middle-income families and small businesses struggling to keep up with health insurance costs;

- n Addressing the state's long-time pension deficit and ensuring secure retirements for thousands of workers by leasing the Illinois Lottery and investing the proceeds toward the pension debt; and,

- n A Capital Budget to make important investments in schools, roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

The Governor's proposed Gross Receipts Tax is what he is basing the far-reaching budget plans. The GRT has met with major opposition from businesses, Chambers of Commerce and individuals throughout the state.

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