

**Daily Herald**

<http://dailyherald.com/article/20110419/news/704199845/>

## **Budget cuts could hurt needy Lake County**

By Mick Zawislak

April 20, 2011



*Mary Lockhart-White, right, rallies supporters of the Community Action Partnership of Lake County Tuesday in Waukegan to protest possible federal cuts.*



*Supporters of the Community Action Partnership of Lake County rally Tuesday in Waukegan to protest possible federal cuts. Proposed federal budget cuts could affect services provided to hundreds of struggling Lake County residents, one of the leading assistance agencies charged Tuesday.*

About 200 supporters rallied at the Waukegan office of Community Action Partnership of Lake County to urge lawmakers to reconsider a potential 50 percent funding cut for the 2012 fiscal year beginning Oct. 1. The action hosted by the Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies was one of several stops on a continuing statewide tour.

“The purpose of the rally is to inform not only our legislators but the community as well,” said Mary Lockhart-White, executive director of the Lake County group.

The agency directly serves about 1,600 clients, and works with other organizations to provide a variety of services, including help with utility bills, rent, medication, and, transportation.

“We serve as a bridge to the other parties, such as Catholic Charities and PADS,” Lockhart-White said. Cuts would limit the Lake County’s ability to assist those groups, she added.

Groups are protesting the possible cut of \$15 million in federal Community Services Block Grant funds to 36 Community Action Agencies throughout Illinois. The block grants serve as safety net services with the goal of helping low-income people become self sufficient, according to the state organization.

“This is the last thing the people of Illinois need considering the poor condition of our state budget,” Lockhart-White said.

Lake County receives \$854,000 in CSBG funds, and would be able to serve 870 fewer people if that funding was cut in half.

The impact would be felt at its food bank, rental and utility assistance and other emergency services, as well as youth and teen programs.

The funds also are used to help low-income small business owners receive training. Lockhart-White said 20 percent already has been cut from the current program year.

“We’re already looking at modifying our budget,” she said.

Proposed federal cuts also would affect energy assistance programs. The Lake County group receives about \$1 million for weatherization and \$6 million in federal funding for low-income heating assistance, which also would be halved, according to Lockhart-White.

“You’re talking about 50 percent across the board — devastating,” she said.