

# Stuart advocates against tax hikes for middle class

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SPRINGFIELD – As the spring legislative session for the 100<sup>th</sup> General Assembly prepares to adjourn, state Rep. Katie Stuart, D-Edwardsville, highlights her work to pass a balanced budget, cut legislative pay and fight for more funding for Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville.

“The bipartisan, balanced budget passed by the General Assembly this week represents true bipartisan compromise,” said Stuart. “Governor Rauner’s budget crisis tripled the state debt and caused damage to our schools, universities, hospitals, small businesses and communities. This budget begins to repair that damage by cutting state bureaucracy, investing in local programs, putting \$350 million more into public schools, all while creating a surplus that will be used to pay down old bills. Our work is not over, but this balanced budget begins the long road of putting our state back on track.”

Stuart is also leading the fight for more state funding to the Edwardsville campus of SIU. Stuart is supporting a legislative package that calls for an independent study of the university system’s funding and governance structure, an equal 50/50 split in state funding and a total split of the two universities into separate entities. Stuart plans to host public meetings throughout the summer to continue these discussions.

“One of my top legislative priorities this year was fighting for equity for Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. My legislation to create a separate board of trustees for each campus, a bill to equally split funding between both campuses, and more recently, a measure to conduct a study to learn the feasibility of a possible split in the SIU system aims to give Edwardsville its fair share of funding and give our campus every opportunity to succeed, thrive and grow,” Stuart added. “As a former math instructor at SIUE, I have seen Edwardsville outpace the Carbondale campus for years, even while being unfairly funded by the SIU system.

Stuart again spearheaded legislation to cut perks for politicians and institute a pay freeze for legislators by blocking an automatic salary increase. Last year, Stuart refused to accept a legislative paycheck until a state budget was in place and has introduced no budget, no pay legislation. After voting against the state income tax hike last year, Stuart supported an extension of the standard income tax deduction for working families.

While Washington insiders pushed through a tax plan that will hurt working families in our region, Stuart supported a new program to will help taxpayers deduct money from their tax bills, while also helping to fund public education.

“I have also worked to fight for Fairmount Racetrack, because it has been a family entertainment destination and economic engine for nearly a century in the Metro East area. It has provided, and continues to provide, hundreds jobs in our region,” continued Stuart. “We are the only state in the nation that has horse racing and casino gaming, but we don’t allow slots at the track, which could provide additional money and jobs for our area. My bill will save Fairmount Park, continue live racing and save our local jobs.”

“Another priority of mine has been to fight for protections for nursing mothers and infants. I introduced legislation to ensure that women returning to work after giving birth are given adequate breaks to pump or breastfeed their child. This measure will also protect women from retaliation, such as pay cuts, for doing what is best for them,” said Stuart. “Although The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants be breast fed for at least one year, unfortunately many women find barriers to following through on what is best for them and their child.”

“I will continue to work collaboratively with local leaders and lawmakers to help improve our communities, as well as meeting with small businesses owners and area residents to discuss ways that we can work together to make life better for families in the Metro East.”