

Chicago Tribune

Reform in Illinois

September 3, 2009

I would like to thank the Chicago Tribune editorial board for meeting with me last week. As the leader of my caucus, I would like to reinforce editorial content that is accurate and respond to content that is unclear and misleading. The Aug. 28 editorial "Keep up your pressure" wasn't the most flattering take on our recent attempts to reform state government. Key components of my discussion were left out of the editorial. And I believe it was a little too kind to a Republican establishment that has often seemed content to criticize rather than collaborate on real solutions for our state.

But the content is very important.

We face serious problems in Illinois. The decisions we make -- and those we fail to make -- will have very real and lasting consequences for our state and its people. With that in mind, I was still optimistic after reading the Tribune editorial.

If you strip away the colorful comments and snide remarks, you are left with an opinion piece that remarkably suggests the Chicago Tribune and state Democratic leaders are beginning to see eye to eye about the steps we need to take to move our state forward.

We agree we need a less generous pension system for new hires, even if the Tribune left out the part about Republican lawmakers conspiring to block a floor vote on the actual legislation.

We agree we need to look at a Medicaid-managed care system, even if the editorial doesn't mention it isn't the budget cure-all that many Republicans claim.

And we agree we need to better balance expenditures to revenues, even though the \$3.2 billion in cuts that we did make this year didn't make the editorial.

Yes we have our disagreements. But when the Chicago Tribune says things like "good ideas" and "positive signs" after we sit down together, I am hopeful.

We may not always agree on matters of public policy, but we do share a common desire to see meaningful reform in Illinois.

-- *John J. Cullerton, president, Illinois Senate, Springfield*