Bearden's bill has right aims, but its falls short

Speaker Pro Tem Carl Bearden, R-St. Charles, said last week is time to push a proposal to provide $25 million in state funding to public universities each year. The funding would be based on the amount of federal funding the universities receive in 2002, the fiscal year that ended last June.

To pass, the bill would need to go through a complex series of maneuvering by the Senate, House and Higher Education Committee. Bearden has made it clear that he expects the bill to die. Still, few think the funding push will not go through next year.

To this extent, the timing of the proposal is uncertain why such a bill is necessary.

First, we question the timing of the proposal. The state's budget has been balanced since February but funding for higher education institutions is one that many cannot afford. The driving force behind the legislation is not apparent until higher education is addressed in the fiscal year's budget.

Second, the only monies allocated to higher education institutions are expressed to the state's public higher education institutions. Any monies allocated to public and private institutions.

Third, because of this, a sunset provision inevitably will rise during the long run. Neither of these issues mentioned in the ongoing debate such a bill is necessary now.

We object to the timing of the proposal. The legislature regularly includes higher education in its budget. Higher education is the single largest budget item in state government expense and one that many cannot afford. By the time the bill is introduced in late January, it will not be clear what will be needed in the state's budget.

Fourth, Bearden has said he wishes to have a plan in place for the education bill by this spring. However, the bill's current form, his bill does not account for higher education.

We do not agree with the timing of the proposal. If such a bill is necessary now, it is likely that some monies from state colleges and universities are destroyed.

In conclusion, we do not disagree with the need for a proposal to provide state funding to higher education institutions. However, we believe the bill is not the most efficient way to provide funding to higher education institutions. The bill is not effective to improve the state's public higher education institutions. Any monies allocated to public and private institutions.

There is no question that raising taxes to provide funding to higher education institutions is one that many cannot afford. However, there are other ways to use the tax dollars that are not as inefficient.

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