

ing \$40,000 per year to Lois Lerner, who lead the targeting of conservative groups. Lerner already made \$175,000 per year, which is three and a half times the median U.S. family income.

A couple weeks ago I read the IRS does not have a good method to determine who gets taxpayer subsidies for health insurance. The IRS inspector general just reported that IRS employees "accidentally" deleted backup tapes of Lerner's e-mails.

Of course, the president, Democrats and the IRS director blame the problems on Republican budget cuts. From whitehouse.gov/budget/omb/historicals I found the following on IRS budgets: 1970, \$917 million; 1990, \$5.824 trillion; 2010, \$11.906 trillion; and 2014, \$11.695 trillion. They had a 1,200-percent increase over 40 years and a less than 2 percent cut in four years. I think most individuals and businesses could live with that.

We are broke because we just look at last year's budget instead of putting things in historical perspective.

Jack Hellner
Springfield

Amtrak cuts bad for college towns

Pension and health

care benefits are vitally important for the public university and college workers and retirees we represent in Springfield. But in this period of great uncertainty about our state budget picture, we also are concerned about how many students will get to and from the campuses.

Steep cuts to Amtrak passenger rail service are on the table.

Gov. Rauner proposed cutting the Amtrak state subsidy by 40 percent in his budget address this spring. The budget lawmakers approved keeping Amtrak funding steady, which is good news, but the governor again threatened to chop the service's funding.

Amtrak is a vital lifeline for many campuses. University and city leaders know rail lines to and from Chicago through communities such as Bloomington, Springfield, Charleston, Macomb and Carbondale keeps them competitive in the ever-intense race for students. Cuts forcing the elimination of routes and times would have long-term consequences. Students facing higher costs or less convenient options to travel between home and campus may very well choose to go elsewhere or to transfer.

SUAA and its members understand our public

campuses are better places to work at when programs and services are protected and students have more reasons to attend.

Cutting Amtrak will take us in the wrong direction, and we strongly urge legislators and the governor to avoid that as they work on a budget solution this summer.

Linda Brookhart
Springfield

—The writer is executive director of the State Universities Annuitants Association.

Cuts cost Illinois more in the long run

Teachers and support staff — the members of the Illinois Education Association — support state workers, many of whom have children attending public schools in Springfield, surrounding communities and all over Illinois.

State workers entrust their children to us each day, and we work hard to provide them the best education. We recognize that state employees work hard delivering much-needed services to our state.

Those services help educators and students. Without them, we suffer.

Illinois' budget is in limbo. Key components

are on the chopping block because some leaders say no more revenue is needed. But cuts have consequences. Slashing social services hurts the families of children in our schools and leaves gaps that schools struggle to fill.

Closing the state museum hurts students by denying them a place to learn about Illinois history, art and science. It also deprives teachers of amazing curriculum resources the museum provides to districts across the state.

Cutting tourism funding hurts the entire state's economy and will only lead to further loss of revenue. Laying off state workers, reducing salaries and taking away their rights, as has been proposed, hurts the employees and their children, leading to a financial drain on communities.

Cutting these resources may appear to save money, but higher unemployment, fewer resources and less support for students costs Illinois more in the long run — not just in dollars, but in nearly every way imaginable.

Cinda Klickna
Springfield

— The writer is president of the Illinois Education Association.

COMMENTARY