

## PA. LEGISLATURE

# A six-month budget splits lawmakers

*Chambers' appropriations chairs divided on waiting for results of federal budget*

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HARRISBURG — At least one top state House Democrat is on the record opposing a short-term budget before the June 30 deadline to fund public schools and vital services while the U.S. Congress finalizes a budget for the fiscal year starting Oct. 1.

A temporary budget was suggested by two leading Republican state senators. Senate Appropriations Chairman Scott Martin, of Martic Township, first told Spotlight PA early this month that he would “never shut the door” on pass-



Scott Martin

ing a partial budget. He echoed that sentiment last week at a Lancaster Chamber forum, saying some legislators have

been discussing it recently.

Martin's view was shared by Senate President Pro Tempore Kim Ward, of Westmoreland County, who suggested to ABC27 News over the weekend that a six-month budget could give the General Assembly a better

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“I don't think it benefits the Commonwealth, nor those who depend on our resources, to have a six-month budget.”

— Jordan Harris, D-Philadelphia, House Appropriations Chair



BLAINE SHAHAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A view of the Pennsylvania Capitol in Harrisburg, Sept. 21, 2021.

## Budget

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understanding of how much federal money Pennsylvania will receive in the new fiscal year.

But House Appropriations Chair Jordan Harris, D-Philadelphia, shot down the idea Monday.

“I think we need to do our constitutional obligation to pass a budget, hopefully by June 30, that funds the Commonwealth for a full year,” Harris told reporters in the Capitol. “I don’t think it benefits the Commonwealth, nor those who depend on our resources, to have a six-month budget.”

Schools, nonprofits and businesses could face difficulties trying to set their annual budgets without knowing how much state money they’ll receive for a full year, Harris said.

Martin’s spokesperson, Jason Thompson, declined to comment on the senator’s behalf.

Gov. Josh Shapiro has been mum on the issue. The first-term Democrat’s spokesperson, Manuel Bonder, did not comment Monday on whether he’d support a short-term budget.

“Governor Shapiro, his Administration, and the budget negotiation leaders of both parties are working hard toward securing a responsible annual budget that delivers for all Pennsylvanians,” Bonder said in a statement. “As the Governor has made clear, getting

this done will require all parties compromising and working together in good faith — and that is exactly what he is focused on doing.”

### Deadline nearing

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the General Assembly and then-Gov. Tom Wolf passed a stop-gap budget to keep the state government operating for five months. They later passed a full budget in November.

This year, Shapiro has pitched a \$51.5 billion budget that would spend about \$3 billion of the state’s leftover cash from last year and \$1.6 billion from its savings. The money would largely go toward boosting funding for public education and social services.

Senators are back in their districts this week, then both chambers will be in Harrisburg next week for voting sessions.

Though Ward told ABC27 that current budget negotiations are the “worst” she’s seen in her 17 years in Harrisburg, Harris said Monday that he thinks the Legislature will have a budget passed by June 30.

“I’ve always said ... what’s important to me is that it’s a budget that reflects the values of our caucus, reflects the values that we’ve talked to citizens across the commonwealth about, and funds those core functions that we have in this commonwealth,” Harris said.