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Associated Press

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) - Action on crafting Louisiana's nearly \$25 billion budget shifts to the Senate this week, after lawmakers in the House wrapped up work on a bipartisan compromise for how to pay for state programs and services next year.

The Senate's financial analysts were combing through the details Monday of the House version of the 2013-14 budget passed late last week, with Senate Finance Committee hearings on the proposal slated to begin later in the week.

In recent years, senators often have tossed nearly all the work done by their counterparts in the House and sided with Gov. Bobby Jindal on how he wanted the spending plans to look. But lawmakers in the House have shown a strong front against being marginalized and could use procedural moves to block the budget if they disagree with what the Senate passes.

The leader of the Senate's budget negotiations, Finance Committee Chairman Jack Donahue, offered kind initial words on the House proposal, calling it an improvement from the spending plans Jindal submitted for the fiscal year that begins July 1.

"I think the budget looks better than it did when (lawmakers) first got it," Donahue, R-Mandeville, said Monday.

He didn't say whether he thought senators would support the House version, however, saying he needed more time to evaluate what was passed.

Lawmakers in the House and Senate have criticized Jindal's proposal to pay for continuing programs with \$500 million in financing from property sales, legal settlements, fund sweeps and other items that haven't yet happened and that would only drum up money for one year.

The House compromise would replace those dollars with money from trimming tax break programs, cuts to travel and contracts at state agencies and \$200 million expected from a tax

amnesty program. Many of the piecemeal dollars proposed by Jindal would instead be used for debt payments, construction work and highway projects, considered one-time expenses.

To make the numbers balance, however, the budget plan would use some short-term fixes, like the dollars from the amnesty program, and assumes \$90 million in improved revenue estimates that haven't yet been projected.

Questions have been raised about whether the numbers work. The Legislature Fiscal Office analysis, for example, doesn't confirm estimates of how much could be raised by the amnesty program, saying the collection rates over the 30-month period were unclear.

The amnesty program would let delinquent taxpayers pay overdue taxes with eliminated or lessened penalties as a way to generate upfront cash for the budget

Jindal opposes pieces of the House compromise budget that he considers a tax hike and says he will veto changes to tax break programs that would raise new dollars for spending.

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