

Illinois lottery winners get IOUs instead of money



Scott Stump
TODAY

an hour ago

A group of Illinois lottery winners who thought their lives had changed after hitting big jackpots are not feeling too lucky right now.

More than two dozen winners since July 1 have gotten IOUs instead of cash because the state lottery commission has announced that it won't make the payments until lawmakers pass a state budget. The lotto limbo applies to those who have won \$25,000 or more, which has to be paid by the state comptroller.



Lottery winners get IOUs instead of payments in Illinois
PLAY VIDEO

MORE VIDEO

"They are all going to have to wait in line until we get a budget," Illinois comptroller Leslie Geissler Munger told reporters at a news conference.

Anything smaller than that sum will still be paid at lottery claim centers around the state, but some of the big winners have expressed their outrage by joining a federal lawsuit against the Illinois Lottery. The lawsuit is calling for a halt in lottery sales until the winners with large jackpots get paid with interest. There is an estimated \$280 million in prize money sitting in the state coffers uncollected, according to attorney Thomas Zimmerman, who is handling the lawsuit.

"We don't know if there will be a budget, when there will be a budget, and why should the lottery winners have to suffer?" Zimmerman told reporters.

Susan Rick's boyfriend won \$250,000, but has not collected a dime yet.

"We had to cancel most everything we planned on doing," she told TODAY's

Kevin Tibbles on Tuesday.

Rhonda Rasche won \$50,000 and wanted to take a friend and her sister on vacation after the death of their mother, but has had to put that on hold.

Helen Whitfield and her family, who won \$400,000, have boxes packed already for a move to Florida whenever their money finally arrives.

"We're not going to be able to enjoy it as old as we are if we don't get it," she told Tibbles.

There has still been no movement on a new budget since the beginning of the current fiscal year on July 1. The legislature is back in session next week as the winners remain with their dreams deferred.