



## Clock ticks on next budget

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State government leaders including Gov. Ed Rendell and Senate Majority Leader Dominick Pileggi conceded after passage of the state budget last week that the 101-day impasse leading to it was inexcusable.

Indeed it was. But the question now is whether lawmakers, especially, will do anything to make sure it doesn't happen again.

Further illustrating the amount of time that lawmakers wasted this year is the fact that just four months remain until Mr. Rendell introduces his last proposed budget in February.

That introduction date is meant to give lawmakers ample time to debate and adopt a budget by the end of the fiscal year, on June 30. Typically, the Legislature does not immediately take up the budget upon its introduction, but waits until the next fiscal year looms.

Next year the underlying situation might be somewhat better. Ideally, the economy will improve somewhat. And some of the measures in the current budget are designed to cover two years.

But the time is now for lawmakers to adopt an ironclad schedule to handle the budget after Mr. Rendell's introduction. There likely will be more hard choices. But there's no reason that they can't be dealt with in a timely manner, especially after the experience of this year's meltdown.