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Raise the Roof Over This

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Raise the ^{ids, 2/20/84} roof over this

IF THE INDIANA General Assembly fails to approve funding for the IU law school addition in the last week of its session, construction will come to a halt in July when current funds run out.

By then, three of the addition's five floors will have been completed. The building will have a roof. But more than half the work of preparing the inside of the new building, as well as renovating the old law building, will remain unfinished.

If this is allowed to happen, IU law students will continue to suffer from cramped, inadequate study space and the University will pay for the delay.

In September, IU law school Dean Sheldon Plager must go before the American Bar Association to report on the progress of the addition. The association warned IU more than two years ago that space must be added to house the school's valuable library collection and provide for medium-sized classrooms or the law school could lose its accreditation.

The association further cautioned that the existing building, built 30 years ago, must be renovated to comply with recent fire and safety codes.

If construction ends this summer with no date set for when it will resume, Plager will have to face a very displeased bar association, and IU could face some stiff sanctions.

The state, too, will pay for a delay. Plager said architects for the law school estimate that a one-year delay — from this session of the legislature until the next — will cost the state another \$1 million for "shut down and start up" expenses. Another year's inflation must

be added in as well.

The General Assembly committed itself to renovating the law school building and funding an addition when it authorized \$5 million for Phase I of the construction in 1981.

Last year, facing a deficit of more than \$400 million, the General Assembly rejected a request for additional funding authority for the law school. But this year the legislature should have a surplus of nearly \$200 million. The question isn't whether the remaining \$7.2 million in funding should be approved. The question is when it should be approved.

And the answer is *now*.

Every day, more than 600 students struggle to study in a building meant to hold 500. Law students, unlike others at IU, spend their entire day — sometimes their night, too — in the same building.

Yet in the law library, there are nearly two students for every carrel. Valuable law journals are stored in crates and cardboard boxes. These conditions convinced the American Bar Association to label IU's facilities clearly "inadequate for its educational program." And IU's program is ranked among the best in the country.

"The only thing a delay can do is hurt the building and hurt the program," Plager said. He pointed out that students from across the country come to IU for "a first-rate education."

In light of the General Assembly's commitment to those students in 1981, it's about time it took steps to provide a first-rate program — today.

Lisa Hooker
for the Opinion Board