

## Working together towards economic recovery

Written by MN State Rep. Jeff Hayden (61B)  
Monday, 02 February 2009 15:22

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This January I had the honor to be sworn in to represent my community and state in the Minnesota House of Representatives. I begin serving at a challenging time, but I am optimistic we can fight for the political change Minnesota needs to recover from an economic recession and emerge stronger than ever.

To accomplish this I need your help. We are always going to be better if an open channel of communication exists between the people and their government. As your State Representative, I have a responsibility to keep us politically engaged by starting a dialogue to let you know what is happening at the State Capitol and how it may affect our communities. I hope you will do your part and share with me your thoughts, ideas and concerns for our community and state.

The first task for the State Legislature this year will be to pass legislation that helps Minnesotans recovery from an economic recession that continues to take its toll. The families in the neighborhoods I represent are experiencing job losses, home foreclosures and a continued increase in cost of health care. One way we are acting quickly is by passing a bill to extend unemployment benefits to workers who have been laid off but still are having difficulty finding a new job. We are also working to ensure any federal dollars that come into Minnesota as part of President Obama's federal economic stimulus package are spent wisely and effectively. In coming weeks as more details emerge about President Obama's economic recovery plan I will let you know how specifically the package will benefit Minnesota.

The economic recession has also taken a toll on our state budget and we have to come up with a way this year to balance a \$5 billion budget deficit. To give you an idea how large our hole is, if we fired every state employee (including the Legislature) and let everyone out of our jails and prisons, we still would have about half the budget deficit left to solve. This will not be an easy process and it will certainly require sacrifice and hard decisions about the priorities that are most important to our state. It's my belief that now more than ever it's critical we preserve the safety net in place for Minnesotans in need. A budget solution that forces our most vulnerable citizens – children, elderly, and disabled - to bear the burden of state budget cuts is not an acceptable course of action.

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A coordinated response to turn our economy around from the President, Congress and the State Legislature will make a difference and help put us on the right track, but government alone will never be the “cure-all.” We also have a community responsibility to enact change, and serve our neighbors. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Everybody can be great... because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.” Whether it's encouraging a friend to apply for a new job or donating a few cans of soup to the food shelf, it's all part of the collective solution we need in these challenging times.

I look forward to working together with you to better our community and state. I'm eager to hear your ideas and input, so please call, e-mail or stop by my office to visit.

Rep. Hayden can be reached by e-mail at [rep.jeff.hayden@house.mn](mailto:rep.jeff.hayden@house.mn) , by phone at 651-296-5359 or at his office at 539 State Office Building, St. Paul, MN 55155