

## Representatives stand against Republican budget proposals

Written by Lydia Schwartz

Wednesday, 11 May 2011 12:54

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At a Minneapolis community budget briefing on Saturday, April 30th, DFL State Representatives took a stand against this session's devastating Republican budget proposals. They not only plan to strip services to the disabled and less fortunate but government operations that all Minnesotans have come to expect.

Most of our state tax dollars go towards helping cities maintain a civilized standard of living. Local government aid is funding provided by the state to city governments throughout Minnesota. It was originally created to equalize property tax burdens across the state and ensure that all Minnesotans have access to services like police and fire, parks and libraries, and other public amenities.

The MN State government has created a need-based formula that determines the amount of money cities and regions receive. Certain cities get more, or less, depending on varying income levels and demands of a particular area.

Areas that suffer local government aid cuts must make up the revenue loss through raising property taxes or by cutting vital services such as ambulances and road repair.

As the budget currently stands, the State of Minnesota will completely run out of money on July 1st. If the legislature cannot work out a compromise by midnight on May 23rd, all state government services will end. State Rep. Frank Hornstein (DFL-South Minneapolis) believes that the MN Republican leadership would rather see a state government shutdown than concede to our need for a strong foundation that benefits us all. "I cannot see them compromising one iota until the very end," he says.

Every two years, the MN Tax Research Division projects the total local and state tax burden on Minnesota families based on previous state revenue and expense plans. The 2011 study forecasts an unreal disparity between the tax rates for different income levels. In 2013, households earning over \$500,000 a year will be required to pay less than 10% of their income in taxes. Whereas families earning less than \$11,000 will be forced to pay 30%!

This is the opposite of the progressive tax ideal that Minnesotans understand is simply the cost of living in a fair and prosperous society.

The Republican plan will transfer our tax dollars out of specially-dedicated funds for local fire safety, 911 operations, services for battered women, community improvement and crime prevention organizations—all programs that directly keep our neighborhoods safe.

Critical medical services and bus routes that serve the elderly and disabled may completely disappear in certain regions of Minnesota.

We will see cuts to education and job development, which will lessen Minnesota's ability to compete in a global market that is shifting overseas. Colleges and universities will force staff lay-offs, program terminations, and possibly eliminate funding for special education.

In addition, cuts to the MN Dept. of Commerce further threaten to destroy Minnesota's

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economy. For example, state agencies will no longer have the funding to protect individuals and our entire economic system from business fraud.

“We are seeing an attempt to roll-back nearly a century of progress in the development of our state and its people,” said State Rep. Jeff Hayden (DFL-South Minneapolis).

State Rep. Jean Wagenius (DFL-South Minneapolis) spoke of the connection between financial support for natural resource programs and our economy. It is imperative that we support a clean energy system as a reinvestment for a strong economy. “For Minnesota,” she says, “the purchasing of coal and nuclear energy resources only sends dollars out of our state. We need our money to circulate [for our benefit].”

Making cuts to the MN Dept. of Natural Resources also threatens public safety. It manages dam inspections and wetland conservation—areas that naturally protect us from flooding. The Republicans plan to eliminate the Disaster Assistance Match, which provides flood-ravaged areas assistance in applying for federal funds to rebuild their communities.

State Rep. Bobby Joe Champion (DFL-North Minneapolis) says that he is very worried about the path Republican legislators are leading us down: “Simply chopping away at public programs will only cause devastating hikes in state fees, property taxes, and county sales taxes.”

Support and development in one region benefits all Minnesotans through economic growth of the entire state. For example, clean energy prosperity in outer state Minnesota benefits business development and well being across the state. “But people think the metro area gets everything,” Champion says.

However, there is a growing division and sympathy for human rights among Republicans, especially those representing swing districts. In order to expand the emerging cracks within the Republican Party, urban DFL representatives encourage all Minnesotans to contact sympathetic Republican legislators. They encourage urban constituents to discuss this issue with friends and family who live or pay taxes in outer state Minnesota. Even people who own a cabin, or vacation in outer Minnesota, have the right to demand government funding for hospitals in the event of injury and other public amenities.

Encourage your state representatives to stand against the Republican-proposed budget!

For more information visit the MN Dept. of Revenue website, [www.Taxes.State.MN.US](http://www.Taxes.State.MN.US)