

House Republican Press Release

January 12, 2009
Press Office: 860-240-8700

“TIME FOR LEADERSHIP”



As the General Assembly begins the new legislative session the largest issue to be tackled remains the budget deficit. While the nation grapples with an economic recession worse than most people can remember, Connecticut, too, is facing biggest deficit in recent decades.

Connecticut is not alone. Thirty-seven states have significant budget deficits as a result of the economic slowdown. On November 24th, the Connecticut General Assembly convened for a special session to address the budget shortfall. However, with a \$391 million deficit for the current fiscal year, legislators could only make \$71 million worth of cuts. Not enough.

Aetna announced this week that it will lay off 375 employees in Connecticut, joining so many other corporations and businesses in the state. Newspapers are shutting down, businesses are failing, and unemployment is rising. Connecticut has lost some 12,000 jobs during 2008 alone.

We must change the way the legislature has operated for the last several years, business-as-usual won't work. We need to find the most efficient ways to run the core functions of government while honoring our duty to protect and care for the less fortunate citizens of our state and those who have fallen on hard times. We cannot expect the incoming Obama administration to bail us out if we, as a state government, are unwilling to embrace the President-elect's central message of bringing fundamental change to our government. There will never be a more opportune, and necessary, time to re-organize and streamline state government agencies and services. It is time for the legislature to do its duty and vote on every budget expenditure, line item by line item.

Governor M. Jodi Rell has made clear her intention to address the budget shortfall without raising taxes and without dipping into the state's \$1.4 billion Rainy Day Fund. We are strongly in favor of her approach. This is not a time for misplaced priorities in the legislature.

We also have the opportunity to take the initiative and lead Connecticut to a brighter and longer lasting prosperity by becoming more business friendly, focusing on technologies of the future such as alternative energy sources and medical research, by using tax to promote new companies moving into our state.

Tough decisions are going to have to be made. Programs and services must face streamlining or receive outright cuts. Our labor force, which uses the bulk of all budget dollars, must shrink—hopefully through attrition, rather than through forced lay-offs. The bottom-line is: we have no more money to spend. Regardless of the merit of any one project—if it's non-essential to the continued operation of the state, it should be deferred until such time as the economy rebounds and funds exist. It is up to the Legislature to begin the tough process, forget the politically expedient and do what is necessary to stabilize our state budget.

We welcome your comments on how we can make our government more efficient to eliminate the state's financial woes. Now is the time for leadership!

Livvy R. Floren, State Representative, 149th District
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