House Republican Press Release

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Harkins: Cuts, not Taxes, is Way to Solve Budget Crisis

HARTFORD—Spending cuts rather than tax increases would best serve residents who are counting on their legislators to close frightening budget gaps projected by state analysts, Rep. John Harkins said.

Residents still shell-shocked by a downward spiraling economy cannot afford to direct more of their hard-earned money toward more state taxes, said Harkins, who represents central Stratford. And creating more state revenue by imposing more fees and fines upon businesses would further hurt Connecticut's fragile economic system, he said.

Last week, Gov. M. Jodi Rell again sounded an alarm over coming budget cycles. Rell said the state faces deficits of nearly $6 billion over the next two fiscal years. The nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis has agreed with her.

Rell called a special legislative session to take up the issue Monday.

Harkins is ready to offer his solution to the General Assembly.

"We need to look at reducing state spending before we do anything else," he said.

The legislature's Appropriations Committee held a hearing Tuesday, where members received information on the projected deficits from a variety of state officials.

"This is our best projection right now," said state budget director Robert Genuario, telling committee members about a projected $18.3 million deficiency in the Department of Correction budget.

Several other state departments are on a watch list, Genuario said.

For months House Republicans have called on the Democrat-led legislature to address the projected shortfalls, fearing their hands-off approach would put the state in an even deeper fiscal hole.

Among the ideas promoted by Harkins is an early retirement offer for state employees, privatization of some state assets, prioritizing construction projects throughout the state and cutting spending at the Capitol.

"When a business owner sees his income drop, he has no choice but to keep closer watch at the money leaving his bank account," Harkins said. "It's about time Democrats at the Capitol did the same."

Harkins, of Stratford, is a member of the following legislative committees: Banks, Insurance and Real Estate; Finance, Revenue and Bonding; Transportation; and Legislative Management.