

House Republican Press Release

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Rep. Harkins Discusses House Republican Budget, Deficit Mitigation Goals at CT Bar Association Event



Urges Responsible State Spending Reductions to Avoid Tax Hikes that could Worsen Recession

House Republican legislators will continue offering responsible proposals to eliminate the state's projected \$922 million deficit for the current fiscal year that focus on reducing state spending and avoiding tax increases that could aggravate and prolong the current recession, state Representative John A. Harkins, R-Stratford, said at a Connecticut Bar Association event Thursday.

Representative Harkins' comments came at a "Preview of the 2009 Legislative Session" for the CBA's Young Lawyers Section at the Shipman & Goodwin law firm in Hartford.

"The state Office of Policy and Management earlier this week said the projected deficit for the fiscal year ending June 30th is now \$922 million, a figure that some experts say could go as high as \$1 billion," said Representative Harkins, the Deputy House Republican Leader at Large.

"Clearly, the one issue that overshadows all others this year is the budget shortfall. Eliminating it and dealing with projected deficits over the next two years amounting to \$6 billion must be our top priority," Representative Harkins said. "With private sector companies closing or laying off employees, thousands of people out of work, families struggling to survive, and revenues drying up, the state legislature must focus on balancing the budget in ways that do not aggravate and prolong the recession."

"Connecticut has been through economic downturns that resulted in budget shortfalls before; but instead of significantly reducing state spending, the General Assembly resorted to fiscal gimmicks and tax increases to bring down those deficits. That strategy deepened and extended those recessions for months. In contrast, low-tax states in the south and southwest that reduced spending and rejected tax increases emerged from their economic downturns faster than we did," Representative Harkins said.

"While their economies were recovering, attracting new employers and generating jobs, we remained mired in economic stagnation. When our economy finally recovered, hundreds of businesses had closed their doors; thousands of jobs were lost forever; and so many of our people had left the state that we lost one of our Congressional seats," Representative Harkins said.

"The current recession is far worse than those earlier ones," Representative Harkins said. "If we repeat our earlier mistakes, I fear for our economic future. Reducing state spending by putting new spending programs on hold, postponing projects that are not essential to public

safety and streamlining state government is the smartest and most effective way to eliminate current and future deficits. It will require some short-term pain, but it will bring us out of the recession sooner, put our state's economy on a stronger footing, restore prosperity and create the kind of stable, high-paying jobs our people have been demanding for years.”