

## House Republican Press Release

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### KEEPING STATE SPENDING IN CHECK



*An Op-Ed By State Representative DebraLee Hovey*

The start of each of the General Assembly's legislative sessions offers great promise. It presents legislators the opportunity to address issues that have been awaiting our attention for weeks or months and to improve the quality of life for the people we were elected to represent. Unfortunately, it also presents the chance to do harm to our state.

The early weeks of the 2007 session have seen disturbing proposals to increase state spending from the majority party. While the state surplus for the current fiscal year is estimated at about \$500 million, the Office of Policy and Management forecasts operating deficits of between \$800 million and \$900 million in each of the following three fiscal years. Therefore, the Legislature must exercise extreme caution regarding any proposals to use the surplus.

One of the most recent spending proposals would use funds for a universal health care program that doesn't yet exist. It would allocate \$125 million from the surplus, \$125 million from the 2007-08 operating budget and an additional \$125 million from the 2008-09 budget. Taxpayers should always be wary when politicians ask for money but cannot tell them how it will be used. For lawmakers to do so with major deficits looming is cause for alarm. Perhaps it comes as no surprise that this plan was introduced by all freshmen Democrats in the House of Representatives, who had been in office less than three weeks before putting forth such a money-grab.

Early in January, majority party legislators unveiled a proposal to usurp Governor Rell's power on the State Bond Commission. This panel meets monthly to award bond funds for local projects throughout the state. The Governor sets the agenda for these meetings and Democrats want the power to place submit their own items for approval. While a number of their proposed allocations may be worthy ones, to allow such an expansion to the monthly agenda would bring the state toward fiscal disaster and ultimately leave our children and grandchildren paying the price.

One should be aware that many years of bonding projects have essentially maxed out the state's credit card. It has left us with the highest bonded indebtedness per capita in the nation, with 11 cents on every dollar of state funding going for debt service. The cost of every project approved by the Bond Commission is paid for over a 20 year period.

Opening this process to members of the Legislature would exacerbate what is already a very serious problem.

It is difficult to imagine why any legislator would want to hamstring Connecticut's future plans in this way. But in addition to forcing our children to pay for many more projects, increasing the cost of debt service would impact the state's current ability to fund services. There are now numerous services such as education that are not sufficiently funded. Likewise, because there have been minimal efforts to curb operating budgets in recent years, proposals for much-needed tax breaks for veterans and the elderly, as well as needed money for the Teachers Retirement Fund, remain the pushed to the wayside.

Before the Legislature starts making promises for new projects, it needs to keep ones already made. The high level of debt in Connecticut should restrict us from opening another credit card. No sensible person would do something like this with their personal finances and we cannot afford to do it with the taxpayers' money either.