

Budget proposals needlessly onerous, wrongheaded



Like many of you, I listened to the governor's budget briefing seeking a reasonable rationale for his proposals for the state work force. We all understand our economy is shrinking and people are suffering, but his proposed [2009-10 budget](#) includes wrongheaded and destructive cuts in state services and the state work force. Meanwhile the budget ignores the vast majority of our cost-cutting and revenue options that could address the states' budget gap without the draconian cuts the governor has proposed.

We are disappointed to learn the governor continues to rely on savings from state-worker givebacks that amount to far less money than the savings that can be realized by cutting the use of high-priced consultants.

Many of the proposals, particularly regarding our benefits, do little to address the fiscal crisis, but appear to be decisions based more on ideology rather than the need to provide immediate savings.

Make no mistake; reopening our contract is not an option. We will not ask our members to give up a hard-earned 3 percent raise when spending on consultants increased during the first seven months of this year by 13.5 percent, and we will continue to fight for the job security of our members.

Now, more than ever, the state needs to get the biggest bang from each tax dollar and can do this by relying less on costly consultants and more on state workers.

The governor's budget proposals would reverse the progress we have made in our efforts restoring pension equity over the last decade, undo progress made to make government more transparent and accountable to the state's taxpayers and have a disproportionate impact on some of the state's neediest residents.

Among the many onerous proposals in the governor's budget are: a rollback of pension benefits to 1983 by creating a Tier 5; merging the Department of Economic Development into an unaccountable shadow agency; cutting 450 beds from the Office of Mental Health; poking a hole in the safety net for the mentally ill; and abandoning many of our troubled youths by eliminating needed services with the closure of state Office of Children and Family Services facilities.

We believe there are better, less damaging ways to address the state's budget deficit and have told the governor so. You can make sure the governor understands and hears our message by joining us at the rally on January 7th.

The governor may not want to listen, but we will be heard.