



For Immediate Release

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Contact: Rep. Steve Doyle (608) 266-0631

Rep. Doyle Column on the Budget

Farmer Jones had 100,000 eggs and big dreams. He decided to make a down payment on that new John Deere he had his eye on. He figured that the money he could get from selling all those chickens would be more than enough to pay for the tractor. But guess what - not all of his eggs hatched. Now Farmer Jones risks losing the farm over his bad decision. Perhaps he hadn't heard that saying about counting his chickens before they hatched.

Unfortunately, our leaders in Madison missed that lesson too.

When the Governor introduced his proposed budget it increased spending by about \$2 billion. On the other hand, it also included drastic cuts to K-12 education, the University of Wisconsin, and Senior Care. He proposed to totally revamp successful and cost-effective programs like Family Care and IRIS. He also planned to pay for our state roads with a credit card. Members of both parties – and thousands of citizens across the state – stood up and objected to these moves. Fear not, our leaders responded, our state economy is booming and the additional tax revenue will solve all these problems. In the first week of May all those eggs will hatch and we'll be awash in money once the Legislative Fiscal Bureau tells us how much "new" money is coming in.

The non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau announced on May 6 that those eggs aren't going to hatch. In fact, the eggs we got were all rotten. It was expected that the LFB projections would show that the Wisconsin economy is growing and we would have hundreds of millions of new dollars to reverse the cuts to education. Instead, there will be no new money whatsoever. Now we are facing a deficit of \$2.2 billion with no new revenue to make it all better.

We can spend hours pointing fingers, but at the end of the day that does nothing to fix this serious problem. It is time to be grown-ups and make some tough decisions.

Here are some of the things we can do to free up money in the budget. We've got an ineffective tax cut designed to only help large corporations that is set to increase even more this year. If we cap it, we'll have \$226 million over the next two years to put back into K-12 education, the university and transportation. We've also got \$345 million in federal Medicaid money, our Wisconsin tax dollars, that is currently going to other states. We need to set aside ideology and accept the money that is rightfully ours.



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
STEVE DOYLE

WISCONSIN STATE ASSEMBLY

94th DISTRICT

And I'm sure you've heard of the proposed \$10 property tax cut included in the budget. To give up the cost of one Friday night fish fry, we'd have \$211 million more to put toward our schools. That is a sacrifice that I, for one, am more than willing to make.

There are some people who are sticking their necks out to propose unpopular options that will bring new revenue into the state. Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee are talking about raising the vehicle registration tax, which could bring in \$204 million. The Secretary of Transportation proposed an increase to the gas tax which would be another \$750 million. Some members of my party have proposed shifting funds from a property tax cut to an increase in the Homestead Tax Credit instead. These are bold ideas, but until we see an actual proposal that is all they are. And meanwhile we are racing toward the budget deadline of June 30.

Cutting back to ensure we can afford our necessities has to start at the top. If we can't fund our grade schools then we certainly can't increase revenue to the Governor's personal office by 5% as he has proposed. If UW-La Crosse is going to lose \$8 million then we shouldn't be asked to spend our tax dollars on a new basketball stadium in Milwaukee. Where are our priorities?

The budget we have right now is not set in stone. We can't predict what the future will hold for the Wisconsin economy, but as it stands we are at a point where we need to make tough decisions that may be politically unpopular. It's time for the politicians to step aside and the statesmen to step forward.

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