

State Representative Peggy Scott

225 State Office Building
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
651-296-4231

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NEWS COLUMN THE STATE SHOULD ACT LIKE OUR FAMILIES

By Peggy Scott
State Representative

As families sit down each month and pay the bills in these troubling times they prioritize where their money goes. They make sure the mortgage and electricity are paid. If there's extra money they might go out to eat or to the movies. The state should do the same thing. But we already know there won't be extra money.

Facing the near \$5 billion budget deficit the state needs to set its priorities and to spend its money where it will do the most good. One way to save money is to reduce duplicated events. Governor Pawlenty offered several ways to do this in his State of the State address. By centralizing the human services departments of all 87 counties to no more than 15 regional enterprises it would drastically cut the redundancy found in county governments.

He also proposed getting cities to join together to buy supplies in bulk and leverage the buying power of the state. Minnesota is currently looking at joining with Wisconsin to buy goods both states need and to combine common services. These ideas would work to save the taxpayers' money and provide better and more uniform services. They are not simply a good short term solution, but they are a viable long term and permanent solution as well.

Just as the families have to limit their expenditures the state government should freeze expenditures as well. The Governor has proposed freezing all state government wages for the next two years. This would help to minimize the number of layoffs that could potentially be needed to help balance the budget. He also proposed enacting legislation that would require a wage freeze for any Minnesota government entity that accepts state money. This will help to keep costs in check and to help balance the deficits that our state, county, and cities are facing.

Growing jobs in this economy is also essential. I support the Governor's plan to reduce the business tax rate by 50% in our state. It will encourage more businesses to locate in Minnesota. He also included a proposal to help the small business owners. Many people in our area are small business owners or work for small businesses. We should encourage their growth and investment in our communities as well.

Both of these proposals will bring more jobs to our state, which will give our economy a needed boost. But I would encourage the Governor to go one step farther and lower the personal income tax rates as well. In Minnesota we have more than 150,000 small businesses that file as individuals, S-Corps, or LLC's. By lowering the income tax rate we could help those small businesses as well as the families.

Fiscal responsibility has been a hallmark of family budgets for many years. In his State of the State address the Governor provided proposals that will help bring fiscal responsibility and stability along with more jobs to our state. I am looking forward to working with my colleagues in the state legislature to enact these proposals for the betterment of our state.

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