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For Immediate Release

Posted: 4/30/2009

NEWS COLUMN WHERE IS THE MONEY GOING?

By Peggy Scott
State Representative

Over the weekend the House voted to raise your taxes by \$1.5 billion. While the House Majority will claim they voted to “raise revenue” for the state, it still takes money out of your pocket. So where will they spend the money they are taking out of your pockets?

To put it plainly, they are spending it on welfare. They are increasing the Health and Human Services budget by \$2.2 billion. That is an increase of over 20 percent. If this bill were to be passed into law it would represent a nearly 55 percent increase in the welfare budget since the Democrats took over control of the Minnesota House of Representatives in 2006.

With this budget increase they want to put 50,000 more people on government run health care programs. While we should be providing assistance to those who truly need it, we should not encourage people to leave their private health insurance and force the taxpayers to foot the bill. The Health Care Access Fund, which would be used to pay for all of the new additions to the program, would be completely depleted of funds by the year 2013. Within four short years the Legislature would have to raise taxes even more to keep funding these programs.

We should be focusing the spending on our priorities. Facing the over \$6 billion deficit that we are, now is not the time to be taking people off of their private health insurance and putting them in government run health care programs. We should be making sure our priorities are being funded first.

Priorities such as public safety along with roads and bridges are actually being given drastic budget cuts by the House Majority. Public safety is being cut by nearly 4 percent. That means our state will have to cut about 200 critical security jobs. Public safety is one of the legitimate functions of government. It is why people come together to create a government. By cutting it we are putting our communities at risk.

Our roads and bridges are in need of repair as well. If you travel along any road you'll find yourself dodging pot holes or stuck in traffic. Under the bill that passed the House the transportation budget would be cut by nearly 20 percent! This means basic projects for our roads will go uncompleted.

We need to get back to the basics and back to the priorities in St. Paul. We should not raise taxes to increase welfare spending. We should be focusing our efforts on getting the state out of the deficit while funding our priorities. We can balance the budget without raising taxes if we get back to the real priorities of our citizens.

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