

July 1, 2011

Dear Friends,

We are writing to share some thoughts on this first day of Minnesota's state government shutdown. Like many in our community, we are deeply disappointed that an agreement was not reached yesterday between Governor Dayton and the Republican legislative majorities.

What is at stake

We remain committed to ensuring that any solution to resolving the state's \$5 billion budget deficit must prevent the worst of the cuts envisioned by the Republican legislative majority. What is at stake in the budget debate involves reversing Republican cuts that: 1) eliminate health care for 140,000 Minnesotans; 2) reduce special education funding by \$370 per child, and make cuts to the Minneapolis Public Schools; 3) slash Metro Transit bus service; 4) cut 15% of the state's workforce; 5) devastate our colleges and the University of Minnesota with tuition increases and funding cuts.

In addition, the GOP budget will raise property taxes by \$1 billion across the state.

The Governor has proposed easing these cuts and property tax increases by asking the wealthiest 1% of Minnesotans to pay income taxes at the same rate as most middle-class taxpayers. This is a fundamental issue of tax fairness.

We are providing below a brief summary of what happened during the last 48 hours of talks and some comments from the Governor.

Inserting social issues into the budget negotiations doomed the talks

While Governor Dayton worked to further refine and narrow his revenue compromise, Republican legislative leaders responded by inserting several very controversial social and non budget issues into the talks at the last minute. These issues had nothing to do with resolving the budget impasse, and created new and difficult obstacles toward reaching an agreement over the last two days. These Republican social policy demands included 1) an insistence that stem cell research be banned at the Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota; 2) adoption of various bills to roll back a women's right to choose; 3) limits on union collective bargaining; 4) adoption of a highly partisan redistricting map favorable to Republicans; and 5) adoption of legislation requiring a photo ID for voting.

Governor Dayton's comments

Last night, Governor Dayton said, "I cannot accept a Minnesota where people with disabilities lose part of the time they are cared for by personal care attendants, so that millionaires do not have to pay one dollar more in taxes. I cannot accept a Minnesota where young people cannot afford the rising tuitions at the University of Minnesota or a MnSCU campus, so that millionaires do not have to pay one dollar more in taxes. I cannot accept a Minnesota where elderly widows are denied the at-home services that permit them to remain healthy and able to live in their own homes, or a Minnesota where local governments have to further slash their firefighters and police forces, or a Minnesota where special education is being cut, so that millionaires do not have to pay one dollar more in taxes."

We strongly agree with the Governor Dayton's comments and his approach to balancing the state's budget. It is our hope that the Republican negotiators will drop their inclusion of social issues in the negotiations and move seriously towards a middle ground to end the budget impasse. We are committed to achieving a fair budget solution that also addresses Minnesota's long term budget needs. We cannot continue to rely on short term shifts, gimmicks and debt.

Thank you very much for your consideration, and as always, please contact us with your thoughts, concerns, and advice regarding this very challenging time for our state.

Best wishes for a happy and safe July 4th weekend!

Sincerely,

Marion Greene
State Representative
District 60A

Frank Hornstein
State Representative
District 60B