

PRIDEMORE ENCOURGES COLLEAGUES TO CUT SPENDING TO FIX THE 652
MILLION DOLLAR BUDGET CRISIS

Madison - In a letter to his colleagues, State Representative Don Pridemore (R-Hartford) is calling upon his fellow Representatives to cut spending rather than raise taxes to solve the current budget crisis. "The State of Wisconsin should not raise taxes in order to fix a problem that was brought about by too much spending," said Pridemore. "The problem is not that we tax too little, but that we spend too much; the solution is clear—we need to spend less." Pridemore added.

"I have challenged my colleagues, Republican and Democrat, to find ways to cut spending." Pridemore said.

The letter which was sent to all members of the Assembly is enclosed here, as is the fiscal estimate from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

May 2, 2008

Dear Fellow Legislators,

Having heard from my constituents, the message is loud and clear that we must balance our state budget with spending cuts and without raising taxes. Our current budget shortfall is the result of excessive government spending and onerous regulations, not because we are "not taxing enough." In the eyes of many, we are perceived as being part of the problem; we must make the choice instead to become part of the solution!

As you recall, we took the Governor's 9% budget spending increase down to 8.2%. Although we thought that we were doing a good job, we now realize that we should have gone further. Fixing the budget shortfall starts with the governor but ends with us. We must accept this responsibility, and we must act boldly and decisively to cut back our spending

I am proposing a partial solution to our budget shortfall that could potentially save about \$45 million dollars. The attached fiscal note, prepared by Art Zimmermann, describes the details behind my plan of an unpaid leave for all state employees. The idea has evolved into a voluntary program that would allow all state employees including legislators to take up to 3 days of unpaid leave in order to comply with existing contractual obligations. If all state employees would take the three days, the savings would total \$52.2 million dollars (without including any overhead costs.)

If administered correctly, this idea could be both simple and easy to administer. If we include ourselves in the budget fix, we will automatically be on the high road and will regain some credibility. Can we all afford to return about 1% of our salaries back to the general fund? It seems that most government employees and programs are sheltered from economic downturns.

This is our chance to 'feel the pain' along with the people we represent and to share the burden along with our fellow taxpayers.

This proposal only puts a dent into the budget shortfall, but along with other spending cuts, we can solve the shortfall in a way we can be proud of. We can also go back to our districts and with energy and enthusiasm that we did the right thing. As an added bonus, we could also include a 1% give back of our per diem and office supply budgets. Think of the leadership we can show the voters of Wisconsin if we start the budget shortfall solution with ourselves!

I would like to thank the Assembly Republican leadership for their continued efforts to negotiate with the Governor and Democrat-controlled Senate. Please contact my office for more information about this idea or to discuss other solutions at (608) 267-2367.

Thank you again!

Representative Don Pridemore