

Maine House Democrats

www.housedemocrats.maine.gov

Dec. 28, 2012

Rep. Rochelo on Governor LePage's Spending Cuts

Good morning, I'm Democratic State Representative Megan Rochelo from Biddeford.

While most of us are celebrating the holiday season this week, lawmakers are gearing up for a new legislative session in Augusta.

This week, we received a much-anticipated Executive Order from Governor Paul LePage to cut state spending to meet a \$35.5 million shortfall in revenues collected by the state.

The governor is required by law to issue the order, called a curtailment, when the state's revenues are lower than expected.

So, you may be wondering why we are facing a shortfall in revenue.

The revenue shortfall is due to a lagging state economy. While many states across the country have begun to emerge from the recession, Maine is one of only three where revenues are below projections.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Maine is the only state in New England where the [economy shrunk](#) last year.

The truth is Maine's economy needs a boost. We need to put more people back to work in the jobs we have now, so they have more money in their pockets to shop locally and in turn help the whole community and the state. And, we need an action plan to grow Maine's economy long term.

We won't cut our way to prosperity. It's time for Maine to invest in our state. We must put our state back on track.

Lawmakers will have to make choices on how we balance the budget. As a state we need to have an important conversation about our priorities.

Governor LePage gave us a starting point this week with his spending cuts. While Democrats don't agree with all of LePage's cuts to education, public health and safety programs, we know we have to work together with our Republican colleagues to stabilize our budget, make our government work better for you, and ensure that we invest in our future.

And our work has only just begun. We will have to close a shortfall in our Health and Human Services budget and we have significant shortfall projected in our next budget partly due to unfunded tax cuts that largely benefit the rich.

The cuts being proposed are only the tip of the iceberg.

We have to ask ourselves if cutting K-12 and higher education makes sense when we should be making sure our children and our workforce are prepared for the future. We face a serious skills gap that can't be solved without strong schools and training programs that work.

Is now the time to cut mental health and public safety budgets when we have seen one tragedy after another involving violence and individuals suffering from mental illness?

Shouldn't we be looking at how these programs can work better to make us safer and better serve the people of Maine?

Should student loans and adoption services be on the chopping block? Shouldn't we be creating more opportunity for Maine people, not less?

As lawmakers it's our job to make sure we are very thorough and open minded-- not driven by ideology.

Now more than ever Maine people need us to put partisan politics aside and get to work on reasonable and fair solutions that will get our economy moving again.

Lawmakers are taking immediate action to convene the Appropriations committee ahead of schedule to review the spending cuts and begin that important conversation about our priorities. I'm honored to be part of that

committee to serve the people of Maine. We will need your guidance in the tough months ahead.

Thank you for listening. I'm Rep. Megan Rochelo from Biddeford. Have a safe and happy New Year.