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Friday, August 7, 2009

Commentary

The Business Times asked readers what they had to say about the ongoing debate over Pennsylvania's budget. Here's a sampling of their responses:

Pittsburgh Business Times

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As a small business owner, these are very scary times. So much remains unknown at both the state and federal levels. I have no idea what the cost of taxes and health care will be. Any attempt to plan personal, business or state budgets may be worthless until some very serious questions have answers.

The sad part in all this is who gets hurt first. Children with educational funding suspended, workers including [W Pennsylvania National Guard](#) members and reservists on active duty waiting for a paycheck.

While we certainly need to curb spending, our governor and leaders in Washington are doing the exact opposite. All the promises made during a campaign come at a cost. The question is, can and will we be able to pay that cost?

Now is not the time for any tax increases. It will only serve to stifle what economic growth and recovery exists. It's high time that our government began spending our tax dollars like it is real money. Someone has to go out and earn it before it gets to Harrisburg and Washington.

Times are tough right now, and our elected officials are not exempt from that reality.

—Shaun Pierce, President, [W Pierce Events](#)

It seems strange that during this budget impasse, the people responsible for creating the budget — the governor, our legislators and senators — are all being paid, including their staffs, but the “regular” state employees are not.

I and my family have to live within our means. Why can't the commonwealth of Pennsylvania? It seems that since we're a commonwealth, the philosophy is “If you don't have wealth, they'll treat us pretty common!”

—Mike Priganc, Owner, [W Michael Priganc and Associates](#)

A lot of companies have cut their work force; isn't it about time for Harrisburg to cut the number of elected officials? Just think of how much money that would save.

—Louise B. Marree, [W Professional Graphic Communications Inc.](#)

While fiscal responsibility is required in a down period, draconian cuts and elimination of important programs and expenses is irresponsible. Legislators may look at elimination of some subsidies as only a one-year effect, but these cuts can cause recipient agencies to fail. The community then permanently loses the value of the organization that provided the services. The cost of regenerating the agencies and starting over is probably greater than the money saved. That is truly “penny wise and pound foolish” on the part of the

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legislators.

—Kenneth C. McCrory, [@McCrory & McDowell LLC](#)

The state needs to operate in a more business-like manner and not just raise "prices" (taxes) when they face a shortfall. Many Pa. companies are cutting staff, reducing pay, cutting out less profitable operations. I am sure any one of us could do the same for state expenses, given the opportunity. Hard times call for hard choices.

—David Leuthold, CEO, [@Premier Institute for Financial Freedom](#)

As we face a looming budget crisis it has become even more apparent to me that Pa. taxes must be increased to provide services to millions of Americans who have lost their jobs, their health care and their pensions due to unwise financial decisions that favor corporate welfare over public welfare. I would recommend we reinstitute taxes for corporations, business and all working people in the state of Pennsylvania to ensure a minimum quality of life for everyone. These are increasingly desperate times. America, a supposedly well-to-do nation, is one of the unhealthiest countries to live in. Redistributive taxes that benefit all the people, rather than an elite few, would be both just and fair.

—Diane S. McMahon, Development Director, [@Community Human Services](#)

As employees and leaders of [@Bethlehem Haven](#), a nonprofit organization supporting homeless women in the Pittsburgh region, we are strongly opposed to the proposed cuts in the state budget. More specifically, we are concerned about the cuts to the Housing and Redevelopment Assistance (HRA), as well as behavioral health programs. We see the effects of this troubling economy every day. There are more working poor and unemployed individuals seeking the services at Bethlehem Haven than ever before.

This is certainly not the time to stifle programs that are so desperately needed. Urgent community development and health needs will go unmet, causing further hardship in our neighborhoods. The costs of the reduced services will trickle down to affect our local economy — leaving the city and county to pick up the tab. We urge our state representatives to tap into the state's "rainy day" fund to restore the funding for these vital programs and to find new sources of revenue to balance the budget.

—Beth Barney, Manager of Development & PR on behalf of Bethlehem Haven staff and leaders

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