

SVdP Voice of the Poor Weekly Legislative Reprt (6/1/09) by Tom Finnerty

Latest news on 2010 Arizona State Budget:

Okay. It appears that they are finally getting down to work.

State Senate President Burns has announced that he is going to try for a vote on the GOP budget this week. He will be meet with small groups of his Senate colleagues before that happens. President Burns has said he would like to work with the governor, but that he wouldn't make her approval of the plan a requirement to move forward.

On the other side of the Mall, House Speaker Adams has announced that he will not be bringing the House budget version up for a vote. He either has a huge chunk of opposition or he is waiting to see what other influences come into play.

The Senate and House Democrats announced a budget plan that would decrease the sales tax rate but would expand it to cover services. They would continue to exempt food and medicine. Without even waiting to analyze the proposal, the Senate and House majorities dismissed the whole idea primarily because it mentioned taxes. House Speaker Kirk Adams said he was alarmed at the paucity of cuts in the Democratic plan.

"What's perhaps most concerning in their package...is that there are very, very, very little real reductions in spending," he said. (Arizonans following the budget crisis are aware that the cuts to the 2009 budget in a number of key areas have been "to the bone".)

And, out of the big tower on 18th Avenue came the Governor. Governor Brewer, bless her heart, announced that she would detail her five-point plan this week, and that there will be a \$225,000 advertising campaign to explain it to the voters beginning June 3. Governor Brewer has taken this step because of the serious disconnect between the understanding by voters that *more revenue is needed* (as expressed in recent polls and in statements by business groups, faith-based and non-profits organizations) and the refusal by legislative leadership to consider *any* form of tax increase. (St Vincent de Paul 's statement appeared in the AZ Republic 5/16/09). The Senate and House Republicans are upset because the governor's campaign will go directly to voters in 18 legislative districts.

In the meantime, the (Joint Legislative Budget Committee) JLBC says that sales for the last quarter were down and sales tax collections were short of expectations. JLBC states they expect the 2009 budget to be \$200,000 short of balance by June 30. They will need a quick fix immediately. (This is in addition to the \$650,000 million deficit for 2009 recently addressed by the legislature).

The news conferences will start this week. Then the robo-telephone calls followed by posturing on the Senate and House floors. Time is of the essence. The end of the 2009 fiscal year is June 30.

Please let your state legislators (two representatives and one senator) know that given the ongoing drop in revenue and need to keep a bare minimum of services funded, you will support a temporary tax increase. Many of our legislators have expressed concern about the impact to Arizona of "cutting our

way out of the budget crisis” and need to hear from constituents. E-mails and phone calls are effective: www.azleg.gov . Click on “How Do I Find My Legislators?” and send or call in your message this week.

Please pray for State Treasurer Dean Martin mourning the tragic deaths of his wife, Kerry, and infant son.