

What's Happening at the Legislature? May 5, 2009

2010 Budget Passes House Appropriations

As reported this morning in the Republic, House Republican Leadership placed nine budget bills on today's Appropriations Agenda. "We're putting this budget in play," according to House Appropriations Chair, John Kavanagh (R-Fountain Hills).

The move followed a decidedly negative response to last week's version which counted heavily on use of funds from Arizona towns and cities and sweeps of school district funds in order to balance the budget. Today's version relies on \$650 million in additional cuts to state agencies plus \$394 million in sweeps of agency balances and \$570 million in "non-tax revenue" (money collected as impact fees to mitigate development) now shown as voluntary contributions from cities.

Not surprisingly the vote on all 9 bills was along party lines with 8 in favor and 5 opposed (except when a Dem was absent). The Republic editorial warned that "Lawmakers must resist trying to fix the state's financial woes by pushing the crisis down the food chain. A big time hit from the state would force deeper cuts in local services or higher taxes and fees at the local level."

While passage of this version of the budget may be questionable based on likely opposition, *it is very important for your elected representatives to hear your voice in opposition. The budget is the primary policy document for any government. The effort to balance the budget by additional cuts will result in a state government that is unable to function effectively.* (See below as one example).

Update on Unemployment Benefits

DES (Department of Economic Security) now estimates that applicants for unemployment benefits should not expect checks for six to ten weeks. Calls to DES regarding the status of a claim are not recommended.

Try e-mailing: azcallcenter@azdes.gov.

Who are My Legislators?

Go to www.azleg.gov and click on "Find My Legislators" on the left-hand side of the page. You have two state representatives and one state senator. Call and leave a message or send an e-mail indicating you want a budget that does not "rob Peter to pay Paul".