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The budget continues to be the primary issue at the Statehouse. As the legislature and governor continue to wrestle with how best to use the taxpayer's money, a few points need to be made as we are all being given various numbers and assumptions regarding Iowa's budget:

- 1) For Fiscal Year 2010, the governor is currently recommending general fund appropriations of \$6.211 billion. This is an estimated \$147.7 million increase over Fiscal Year 2009.
- 2) Fiscal Year 2010 will STILL be the largest budget in the history of the state of Iowa.
- 3) We do not know how many dollars the Federal Economic Stimulus Act will bring to Iowa.

As Iowans continue to face historically bad economic times, it must be noted that Iowa is still poised to have record spending for Fiscal Year 2010. Please keep this fact in mind as you continue to hear from the various agencies, legislators, and the governor about how much is being cut from the budget. Personally, I do not think that record spending is the message your state government should be sending to Iowans facing such uncertain economic times. Every government program needs to be scrutinized and hard questions need to be asked: is the program worth keeping and is it reaching the intended citizens? These are the questions I am asking and I will continue to ask.

Much has been made of the dollars that might be coming from President Obama's Federal Economic Stimulus Act. We do not know how much money this will be, though Senator Harkin estimates it to be \$1.5 billion over a two-year period. I liken this to taking out a personal loan to cover credit card payments. This may erase the credit card problem, but will do nothing to alter overall debt. What will happen in three years when this money is no longer there? It should also be noted that the dollars coming to Iowa as "stimulus" are in actuality another form of debt on the federal level that will be passed onto future generations.

Finally, one of the worst proposals that could be floated at any time, let alone in a recession, has reared its ugly head at the Statehouse. The "Fair Share" legislation has a real possibility of becoming state law. This legislation mandates that all employees be required to pay into a union that is represented at their place of work. There are many serious problems with this idea. Rather than being forced into such an arrangement, shouldn't the employee decide if he or she wants to join a union that might already exist? Why would we make an employee pay into a union with which he/she very well might not even agree? This bill would be very bad for the state of Iowa and it represents the kind of government intervention that makes people leave our great state.

Peter Cownie (R-West Des Moines), represents District 60 in the Iowa House of Representatives. The district includes most of West Des Moines in Polk County. He can be reached via e-mail at Peter.Cownie@legis.state.ia.us or by phone at 281-3221.