

## State's budget must deal with real numbers, not false hopes

I've been traveling around the state recently, meeting with individuals and public officials in towns like Greenwood and Guntown, Monticello and McLain, Richton and Rosedale. The discussions have focused on the tough economic situation in our state and country.

In those discussions, I've heard firsthand from the people how they are dealing with the sluggish economy. They're practicing what parents have taught their children for generations—be realistic about how much money you have, and don't spend more than you have.

The size of the budget doesn't matter; the principle is the same. It's time to use that principle at the state level.

We knew these times were coming, but the times are tougher because of overly optimistic revenue projections used in shaping the budget. Earlier in the year, after meeting with Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan and reading reports from other economists, I urged a conservative revenue projection of one percent growth.

Following the adoption of the projection of nearly four percent, I asked state agencies in May to budget only 45 percent of their appropriations for the first half of the fiscal year. Based on the current situation, I believe this was the right move.

Those agencies that took this action are in a better position now to deal with the shortfall in revenue collections, now at \$66 million below estimates.

As Governor, I have a fiscal responsibility to the people of Mississippi. It is my job to provide leadership and planning for the good times as well as the bad times. It's a responsibility I have taken seriously for the past seven years in my time as Lieutenant Governor and Governor, and it's one I won't step away from.

The work is underway on developing the revenue projections for next year's budget. Again, all the evidence from the Federal Reserve Board and economists points to an economy that won't begin its recovery until at least the third quarter of 2002. We have to be very careful and very prudent in our estimation of revenue growth for the next fiscal year.

Mississippi isn't alone in this budget predicament. States around the country are dealing with budget shortfalls reaching into the hundreds of millions. However, this shared problem doesn't make Mississippi's situation any easier.

It is important for all involved in the budget process to remember we are dealing with real numbers and real people. Like oil and water, false hopes and real numbers don't mix. We cannot afford to threaten our stability by offering an elusive goal for growth in Mississippi.

There are people who work hard every day around this state to make ends meet for themselves and their families. They don't plan their spending on what they hope to bring in; they plan it on what they know they'll bring in. I want to do the same. The people of this state deserve and demand real solutions. I'm going to work hard to see that they get them.



From the Governor

By RONNIE MUSGROVE

Letter to Editor in Answer to Editorial, Amory Paper 11/14/01

To: Governor Ronnie Musgrove

What does it take for Mississippi Government to see the light? We just had another plant to close putting 600 more people out of work and adding to the 11.3% area unemployment. We have 2 sheets of homes running in foreclosure in the area papers. We have 14 sheets listing people who can not pay county property taxes. We have 10 sheets of people who can not pay city property taxes. There were about 100 judgements issued by local JP courts to "collection agencies" in Monroe County last month. There were over 100 bankruptcies filed in Aberdeen last month. There are 2 auto repo lots in the area that are over full and the transports can not empty the lots taking the cars to the Jackson auto auction fast enough to give room for new repossessions.

It is time for Mississippi government to "see the light" and reduce government and government employment to reflect the present economy and poor employment. You need to take a long hard look at the multitude of Boards and Commission that are a 100 million dollar drain on Mississippi and reduce the high paying duplication of services. The cuts need to come at the "top" where government appointees make 2 to 5 times the average wage of under \$18,000.00 of Monroe County workers. It is time to look at the large amounts of funds in Mississippi and the huge trust funds built up for "perks" for the upper income state employee. Can Mississippi justify the Billions in these trust funds when many of the working poor are loosing their homes and autos? There is more machinery of government than is necessary, too many parasites living on the labor of the industrious. At present we have two hopes for our children in Mississippi. One is that they go to heaven, the other is to leave Mississippi and find employment in another state.

If Mississippi government realized and practices the basic principal of the Republican form of government. The equal rights of Mississippi citizens and the happiness of every individual acknowledged by Mississippi government to be the only legitimate objects of Mississippi government we would not have the problems we now face with the loss of our jobs and homes.

If Mississippi government derived their just powers from the consent of the people of Mississippi and had the welfare of it citizens at hart we would not have the problems we now face. Mississippi government has long forgotten that the will of the mass of the citizens is the safest depository of their own rights and that when excesses limit government to the sound health of government for the people.

It would matter very little and be of very little consequence who governs Mississippi, Democrat; Republican or independent, if the sincerely and zealously cherish the principles of this state and the republican (not party) form of government.

Our state has fallen into anarchy and would decide forever the destinies of the citizens of this state, and seal the political heresy that Mississippi citizens are, as assumed by Mississippi government, to be incapable of self-government. The care of Mississippi citizens and their happiness and not their destruction should be the first and only legitimate object of Mississippi government.

We request of the governor and suggest the following. That Mississippi government be reduced "from the top" by employment by 25%. That perks insurance and retirement be reduced to the level of the average working citizen of this state. That government salaries be reduced to correspond to the wages of the workers in Mississippi that pay these salaries. That the governor take a long hard look at the court system in Mississippi and require that they return to the basic guidelines of or Mississippi Constitution. That an accounting of the "hidden" accounts of Mississippi be published and used for the benefit of Mississippi citizens not government employees.

**"The whole art of government consists in the art of being honest." Thomas Jefferson: Rights of British in America, 1774.**

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