

Capitol Update from Sen. Matt WilliamsA

Written by gothenburgtimes
Wednesday, 17 May 2017 19:59 -



Greetings District 36. Over the course of the past four months the Appropriations Committee has worked hard to craft a balanced budget for the State of Nebraska. The task was made difficult when the Forecasting Board projected a significant revenue shortfall. In fact, this revenue shortfall grew to \$1.1 billion in a \$9 billion budget over the next biennium. Debate on the mainline budget was lengthy and contentious. The Appropriations Committee used a combination of budget cuts, reappropriations, and some of the rainy day fund to balance the budget.

Even though the mainline budget proposal included over \$700 million of cuts, some senators wanted more. I supported the Appropriations Committee proposal as being the prudent approach to our current situation. The Committee used due diligence coupled with the input from long-term experts in economic forecasting to come up with their proposal. Some senators wanted further cuts to the University of Nebraska system, Medicaid reimbursement to those who provide services to our state's most vulnerable people, community colleges, and the water sustainability program. In my judgment further cuts in these areas would cause significant long-term damage to our state. The budget is now being evaluated by the Governor and he will decide if he signs the budget into law, vetoes it in its entirety, or line-item vetoes specific funding levels.

Now that the budget is passed the pace of the Legislature has quickened. The Speaker of the Legislature announced that we will be finishing our work four days early. Hooray! This is good news for senators and taxpayers. I'm looking forward to going home for the summer.

This time of year, the Capitol building is buzzing with energy from fourth-graders from across the state. Last week, we welcomed fourth-graders from Pleasanton and Ravenna to the Capitol. It's always fun to see the excitement in the eyes of our young people. They have great questions and great insight into what's important.

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In the midst of a busy week at the Legislature our son and his wife brought our sixth grandchild into the world. Lila Josephine Williams was born in Omaha on Monday, May 8. Looking at her in the hospital reminded me of why we work so hard to create a bright future for the residents of our state. I continue to pray each day that our Senators bring wisdom, imagination, and compassion to our role as policymakers. It can be easy for some to let the politics become the guiding star rather than simply doing what's right for our state.

If you have any final thoughts about this session before we adjourn, feel free to contact me at (402) 471-2642 or by email at mwilliams@leg.ne.gov. Thank you for your thoughts and prayers during this long session.