

Rep. Sykes (D-Akron) - Ask the question many are asking. Where is the beef?

Sykes Requests Additional Information on State Budget

For the second time in less than two weeks, a Democratic member of the House Finance and Appropriations Committee has requested additional budget information from Kasich administration officials.

In a letter to Office of Budget and Management Director Tim Keen on Wednesday, Sykes, who is the ranking minority member on the committee, wrote: "I am apprehensive about the lack of available data necessary to reach a comprehensive understanding of potential impacts [of the proposed state funding cuts] to our schools, businesses, and communities.

"In order to carry out our responsibilities as state representatives to review, analyze, amend, and ultimately to vote aye or nay on the state's biennial budget, it is imperative that my fellow members of the General Assembly and I receive the proper information and detail to make informed decisions. Despite having asked for this information during the House Finance and Appropriations committee hearings on the budget and faced with an impending amendment deadline, as of this date we have not received this information. Therefore I am making this request for information and public records so that we will receive the necessary information and may feel comfortable with our analysis of this complex and important piece of legislation. ..."

Specifically, he asked for answers to the following questions:

- "What is the effect of the language allowing OBM to enter into contracts that outsource public services to private entities in terms of the division of liquor? Would JobsOhio be able to outsource or sell the division or its operations or profits to a private entity without the Legislature's consent?
- "What is the policy reason behind making JobsOhio a private entity, exempt from paying Ohio taxes? If JobsOhio did have to pay Ohio taxes, what would be the revenue from those taxes?
- "What percentage of projects will be affected by the prevailing wage exemption? How many projects currently exceed the \$5 million threshold? How many projects will be affected by the prevailing wage prohibitions in the budget?
- "How much money is being used to balance the budget using money made available to the state due to the Affordable Care Act? Are these funds tied to federal requirements in order for the state to receive them?
- "What is the actual dollar amount of funding cuts to Ohio's hospitals? Please provide this information on a hospital by hospital basis.
- "How is the \$119.5 million in savings calculated for the hospital non-contracting language included in the budget?
- "What are the actual dollar amount funding cuts, including when applicable revenue losses due to TPP and KWH policy changes in the budget, for local developmental disabilities boards, mental health boards, area agencies on aging, PASSPORT providers, county JFS offices, child support enforcement, and children services and child care providers? Please provide this information statewide and on a county by county basis.
- "What specific effects will the cuts to the Ohio Civil Rights Commission have on their ability to process cases? Could their workload be further exacerbated by the changes made in SB5?
- "What is the revenue impact due to the closure of seven taxpayer service centers? Currently, it is estimated that they bring in \$73 million in revenue each year and closing the seven centers would save approximately \$29 million.
- "The Ohio Farm Loan Revolving Fund is taking an 85 percent cut in the executive budget. Yet the director of agriculture said that the fund is not actually taking that cut. Please substantiate this statement. Will less money be available for loans than was available in FY10-11? If so, how much less?
- "What will be the financial impact associated with requiring courts as opposed to the adult parole officers to prepare pre-sentence investigation reports?"

In addition to the information above, Sykes also requested the following public records:

- Data compiled by OBM used to estimate how much money would be generated by leasing state parks for drilling purposes.
- Public records compiled by OBM to estimate how much money is being used to balance the budget using money made available to the state due to the Affordable Care Act. Are these funds tied to federal requirements in order for the state to receive them?
- Public records containing data that shows the value of the five facilities that DRC is looking to sell (including land, fixtures and furniture). Has the state conducted such an appraisal, and if so, what are the details of the appraisal contract (in addition to the results of the appraisal)?
- Public records containing data that show the amount of remaining debt the state has incurred on these five facilities. Will any of the proceeds of the sale of these facilities go to retiring the related debt?
- Public records estimating the number of employees that will be laid off due to the closing of the DYS facility.

Sykes concluded, "I also call your attention to a similar request made to Robert Sommers on April 6 for information related to Gov. Kasich's K-12 education budget. We have yet to receive a response to this inquiry." (See *The Hannah Report*, 4/6/11.)

He asked that the information be forwarded by Friday, April 15 -- the deadline for amendments to House Finance and Appropriations Committee Chair Rep. Ron Amstutz (R-Wooster). He also asked Keen to again come before the committee to answer questions.

Story originally published in *The Hannah Report* on April 14, 2011