

DEMOCRATIC RADIO ADDRESS

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For more than two years—since Paul LePage began laying out his policies as Governor, Democrats have consistently said the same thing: Governor LePage’s policies pick winners and losers. And when they lose, they lose big.

Good Morning. This is Assistant Senate Majority Leader Troy Jackson of Allagash.

Late last week, the Governor unveiled his proposed budget. A budget rife with an extreme political agenda and one that illustrates his priorities and choices.

Lawmakers have poured over more than 900 pages of the Governor’s budget plan to understand the drastic implications. Here’s what we know:

The Governor has dumped more than \$420 million dollars worth of problems on to our local towns and cities.

He’s laid out a plan that will choke Maine’s financially strapped towns by shifting the financial burden on to them by withholding nearly \$300 million in “revenue sharing” dollars from Maine’s towns.

He is forcing local selectboards and city councils across our state to do things like cut essential town services—police, fire, and rescue. Or, force them to raise property taxes—in some cases as much as 30 percent. Or, maybe, towns will have to do both. In fact, the City Administrator for Lewiston, said that in his town, property taxes could go up as much as \$300 a year for an owner of a \$150,000 house as a result of the governor’s choice to eliminate revenue sharing.

And at a time when Maine’s economy is still sluggish, a time when more than 50,000 Mainers are still out of work, we have to question whether the Governor’s choices will only further spiral our local economy?

One thing is for sure, it does not seem like good common-sense to take away property tax relief programs like the Homestead exemption and circuit breaker program. These programs have provided tax relief to more than 200,000 Maine households. Everyone has to live somewhere. And when the Governor suggests that Mainers should take on an additional property tax burden and also take away responsible programs that help them—he must not get it. He must not understand the tremendous stress and pressure most people face when trying to pay their bills and stay in their homes.

Governor LePage wants to talk about responsible and efficient government. But by shifting the costs to our towns, he's merely passing the buck. This is not responsible—nor is it efficient.

There will always be many different opinions about the best way to balance a budget, but nearly all of us can agree that a massive tax shift on to our middle class, small businesses, communities, elderly and the poor is a poor choice.

It's not responsible. It's not fair. And some may even say that the budget looks like he's helping his friends and punishing his enemies.

Maine needs a budget that strengthens our towns and will get our economy moving. Democrats believe we need a balanced and responsible budget that won't undercut our state's economy or harm our effort to grow the middle class.

This budget has a long way to go. I don't envy the task of my colleagues on the Appropriations committee. But I encourage all of you out there to pay attention. The next few weeks and months are critical. There will be opportunities for you to weigh in and tell lawmakers in Augusta about *your* priorities.

Do you agree with the Governor's decision to gut the Drugs for the Elderly program and the Medicare Savings Plan? Together these programs help nearly 35,000 seniors pay for their life saving medications and afford the copays to their doctor.

I want to pass along to you, a question posed by my Senate colleague Dawn Hill during this week's Appropriations meeting, she asked: What alternatives do our seniors have to make up for the cuts to these programs. We know they can't go back to work to pay for their medication. The LePage administration replied, "there are no alternatives."

That's unacceptable.

Thank you for listening. This is Assistant Majority Leader Troy Jackson of Allagash. Have a good weekend—and please take a moment to reflect on the good work of Dr. Martin Luther King. His dedication to the civil rights movement has made our country a better place—and us better people.

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