



INVEST IN MINNESOTA TALKING POINTS

FRAMING YOUR MESSAGE:

Ask any Minnesota family struggling to make ends meet - the impact of the national economic recession has hit our state very hard. Yet, many of the proposals for addressing the growing gap between public needs and the state's ability to meet them would reduce opportunity, increase economic insecurity and stall recovery. That's the problem with a cuts-only approach. It would mean:

- **Cutting investments** in education, health care, public safety, infrastructure and transportation will severely undermine the foundations of Minnesota's future prosperity. This approach leaves behind families and individuals who have been hurt by the recession, and it will keep Minnesota businesses from growing.
- **Leaving in place a tax system in which the wealthiest pay less than working families is not only unfair, it will cripple recovery.** We need an approach that ensures that everyone is paying their fair share.
- **Drastic reductions in critical services** needed most by families struggling in tough economic times will only make matters worse. The budget should not be balanced on the backs of the middle class or those hit hardest by the economic crisis – seniors, children, people with disabilities, the unemployed, and low-income families.
- **More lost jobs** will damage the state's economy and further threaten recovery in Minnesota by reducing income to local businesses. Education, health care, and vital services help preserve jobs.

There's a better choice: a balanced approach that includes revenue. In tough times, this approach strengthens the middle class by protecting investments in our future prosperity, provides opportunities for people to succeed, and helps families struggling with growing economic insecurity.

OPPORTUNITIES TO TELL YOUR STORY:

- **Contact your state legislator.** *Your story matters.* Call, email, or visit your state legislators. They need to hear from you. Show them the impact of recent and proposed cuts at a personal and local level and ask them to support revenues raised fairly. (www.leg.mn)
- **Participate in local community meetings.** Attend town hall meetings or in-district meetings with your legislators. Tell your neighbors, elected officials and candidates for office your budget concerns and why you support raising revenue.
- **Reach out to those that support your organization** (staff, volunteers, board members and donors). Use meetings, newsletters, websites and social media to tell your stories and make the case for raising revenues.
- **Make the case to other organizations, colleagues, and neighbors.** Let people know that this recession is putting families and businesses at risk. There is a solution; it involves adopting a balanced approach that ensures everyone pays their fair share.
- **Write a letter to the editor.** Submit a short 200-word letter to the editor of your local paper that calls upon state leaders to adopt a balanced approach that includes increased revenues to meet the growing needs of our families and communities. Be sure to include your contact information.
- **Stay involved with Invest in Minnesota** as new opportunities for action emerge.

FACTS YOU CAN USE:

Facts and statistics can help you make your case, but be sure to also state why the numbers matter to people directly impacted and for our shared values. You know best how your organization has been impacted by budget cuts, but here are several examples of cuts resulting in disinvestment and inequity over the years:

- Confronted with budget deficits starting in 2002, the legislature has enacted cuts causing Minnesota to lose ground compared to other states:
 - State funding for higher education has dropped 16 percent from 2000 to 2009. One result has been big increases in tuition. Tuition went up 68 percent at the University of Minnesota from 2000 to 2007, and now is over \$10,000 per year. The average state financial aid grant dropped by seven percent over the same time period. This raises questions about whether the state is truly committed to having higher education affordable to all Minnesota students.
 - After significant funding cuts and program changes were made to our state child care assistance program in 2003, 11,000 fewer children were helped. We know that high quality child care can help ensure that children start kindergarten prepared for success.
- As a consequence of a cuts-only approach to solving budget shortfalls in 2009, many vulnerable populations are losing critical programs and services. For example:
 - 6,000 Minnesotans with disabilities now receive less in-home assistance and support services as of January 2010 resulting in serious consequences to their health and safety and threatening their ability to live independent lives.
 - 1,500 – 2,500 Minnesota households will be unable to access legal services due to cuts in funding for civil legal services. These services help families with issues such as abuse, violence, neglect, homelessness or other major challenges. It is estimated that each year 75 percent of eligible families with legal needs are already not being served.
 - 3,300 – 4,700 jobs in local government, state government, school districts and private industry will be lost through June 2011 as a direct result of budget unallotments.

The majority of Minnesotans already recognize that we can do better by introducing a balanced approach to raise revenues while making the tax system more fair.

- The majority of surveyed Minnesotans support a balanced approach to addressing budget shortfalls that includes raising taxes in order to avoid painful cuts to services for the elderly and people with disabilities, education, health care and job training.
- Minnesota's tax system asks lower and middle income households to pay more than those with the highest incomes. The Department of Revenue reports that those making more than \$448,000 annually pay 8.9 percent of their incomes in state and local taxes while those making between \$31,000 and \$67,000 pay over 12 percent.

Invest in Minnesota unites Minnesota's faith communities, labor and nonprofit organizations around raising revenue fairly.

For more information and resources visit the Invest in Minnesota website at www.investinmn.org or contact Leah Gardner at 651-757-3063 or leah@mncn.org.