

CAPITOL VIEW: Politicians say the darndest things

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Friday, 14 January 2011 22:03 -

Listen to enough state senators this time of year and you might feel like you're back at grandma's house for Thanksgiving when the old girl calls everyone for dinner.

"Everything's on the table!"

How many times have you read or heard that one as lawmakers approach a nasty budget situation in the 2011 session?

It means most cows will have no sacred status when it comes to cutting spending in the face of an approximately \$1 billion revenue shortfall. There are exceptions. No one will take seriously any notion that the tax incentives provided for businesses might be reduced.

Generally, tax increases also will be frowned upon as potential, partial cures for the state's fiscal ills. Certainly the state sales and income rates won't be tinkered with, although a proposal to greatly increase the tax on cigarettes is viewed fondly by some senators.

Meanwhile, Gov. Dave Heineman said the picture might not be as bleak as current projections make it appear.

Current analysis projects spending growth of 10.4 percent, some \$1.2 billion.

The AP noted a recent Heineman comment: "That is unrealistic, and it's not going to happen. Without \$1.2 billion of new spending and some use of the cash reserve fund, there is no projected shortfall."

Heineman has all but ruled out consideration of any tax increases, and previously indicated opposition to the use of the state's cash reserves.

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Returning to the subject of quotes from lawmakers concerning the budget-writing process for the next two-year budget cycle, here are some of our favorite observations by lawmakers, offered during recent interviews with various reporters:

“We’re going to have to eat some things we don’t like,” said state Sen. Russ Karpisek, of Wilber. “This is a different Legislature this time around. We haven’t seen anything like this before.”

“If the state of Nebraska were a car, if you kept shaving 2 or 3 percent off all the working parts, before too long you’d have a piece of junk — nothing works,” said Sen. Gloor of Grand Island. “Instead of talking across-the-board cuts we’ve got to be more discerning and come in and make vertical cuts.”

“The budget’s like a 2,000 piece puzzle and it’s going to take us an entire session to put it together,” said Speaker of the Legislature Mike Flood of Norfolk.

“It’s a good time to reinvent government,” said Sen. Lavon Heidemann, chairman of the Legislature’s Appropriations Committee.

“Everything is on the table,” said too many lawmakers to count.

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