

House Democratic Caucus

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House votes against harmful Senate Republican budget

Democratic and Republican House members vote to send budget to conference committee

HARRISBURG, July 21 – With a strong bipartisan vote, the Pennsylvania House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly today to reject a budget plan offered by the Republican-controlled state Senate that would have significantly slashed funding for basic education and other services that protect children, seniors and the disabled.

For the third time in less than a week, House Democrats stood firm against Republican proposals that would have taken a slash-and-burn approach to the state budget and passed the buck for public education funding to local property tax owners. Today's 150-49 vote rejecting the Senate Republican plan has set the stage for a conference committee, where designated representatives for both the House and Senate will negotiate a compromise budget plan.

"Today's bipartisan vote against the Senate Republicans' budget plan is a clear sign that members of the House – from both parties – are committed to fighting for our children's future," said House Majority Leader Todd Eachus, D-Luzerne. "For the last several months, House and Senate Democrats, along with Governor Rendell, have repeatedly made attempts to find a middle ground in this budget crisis.

"We have been waiting for the Senate Republicans to sit down with us at the negotiating table to hammer out a reasonable and responsible budget plan," he continued. "It is our sincere hope that our action today will spur the Senate Republicans to finally get serious about breaking this budget stalemate."

Speaker of the House Keith McCall, D-Carbon, said today's vote by the House is a key step toward finally passing a state spending plan.

"This vote will move the process forward and finally get us on a path to passing a budget, getting paychecks to state workers and delivering on our obligation to all 12 million Pennsylvanians," McCall said. "Now leaders from both parties from the House and the Senate can work together and deliver a final budget product and end this impasse."

"The pressure on government to provide services increases especially when the economy declines. This is not the time to abandon people, but rather, it's the time to invest in them," said Dwight Evans, Majority Chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. "Today we sent the Senate Republicans a very clear bipartisan message: Pennsylvania needs to raise revenue to meet the needs of its citizens."

Evans said he hopes Senate Republican leaders will agree to return to the negotiating table immediately.

"I've said all along that we have to negotiate and we have to cooperate," Evans continued. "There are 12 million Pennsylvanians, including 77,000 state workers, who want us to get this done."

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CONTACT: Bill Thomas
Office of the Majority Leader
Phone: 717-787-2229
Email: wthomas@pahouse.net