

Republican response to State of the State address
By Rep. Dan Kristiansen
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Good afternoon from Olympia...

I'm State Representative Dan Kristiansen, House Republican chairman. I represent the 39th Legislative District, which includes parts of King, Snohomish, Skagit and Whatcom counties.

For the next few minutes, I'd like to share with you some straight talk about the challenges our citizens and our state are facing - and about what brought us to this point.

We as Republicans stand for protection and preservation of a free society, a free-market economic system, limited government, low taxes, a minimal bureaucracy, and the concept that government should do for individuals only those things they cannot do for themselves.

Individuals are more creative, more resourceful and more enlightened than governments, and free markets work best for the economic health of any people.

We all know the current economic situation in our state is serious. There are a record number of Washingtonians out of work. Businesses are suffering. People are wondering how they're going to pay their mortgage. They're worried about how they are going to afford their medical bills. Those who have been working all their lives are now wondering when they will be able to retire.

However, I'm optimistic about the future. There is hope. And I'm confident brighter days are ahead. Answers to our economic situation are easy, it's the will to do what's right that seems so hard to find.

We must remember that revenue to pay for our education, health care and transportation depends upon not only a healthy economy, but good budgeting practices by the legislature and governor.

So today, I'm asking you to pay attention to what is happening in Olympia, become involved, and hold us, your legislators, accountable.

We've just heard from the governor. We have a budget deficit that could well exceed a record seven billion dollars.

How did we get in this mess?

The governor has said it is the result of the national economy.

But that's only part of the story. Let's go back a few years.

The severity of our state budget crisis is largely due to mistakes made right here in the Legislature.

Under the governor's watch, the Democrat majority in the Legislature increased spending by 33 percent over the last four years.

We went from a two-billion dollar surplus just two years ago to nearly a seven-billion dollar deficit today.

That's a nine-billion dollar swing in the budget in only two years. This is poor stewardship of the tax dollars you pay.

The Legislature was spending at a rate faster than the revenue increases.

In terms of our own pocketbooks, that's like hoping for a 33 percent increase in your paycheck and spending to that level, but only getting a five percent pay raise. Your paycheck has increased by five percent, but now you have spent far more than you're earning.

This level of spending is unsustainable, and legislators knew this when the budget was passed two years ago.

It took Washington 114 years to grow state spending up to \$25 billion dollars. But it only took four years to increase spending by more than \$8 billion dollars.

So that's the history. It's useful to understand it so we can move forward with success and not repeat our mistakes, or prolong the mess we are already in.

We have to come together as a Legislature united toward the needs of the people.

I know you care about keeping your homes and your jobs, putting food on your table, making your family budget stretch, affordable healthcare and sending your kids to college and these are some of our important priorities.

As Republicans, we begin by agreeing with one important principle in the governor's budget proposal – NO tax or fee increases.

It's time to eliminate the option of raising taxes- take it entirely off the table.

You the taxpayers and employers did not create this crisis and you should not be expected to bail out state government.

As Ronald Reagan said, “We shouldn’t look to government to solve our problems, government is the problem. “ Too much regulation and a bloated bureaucracy have contributed to overspending.

The governor also talked about economic stimulus. Republicans agree and the best way to help the economy is to help business retain and create new jobs.

We can't dig our way out of a budget deficit by spending tax dollars to increase government jobs. That's part of what contributed to this deficit in the first place.

As Winston Churchill noted, “For a nation to try to tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle.”

Solving our budget crisis and moving us forward toward a better economy comes down to setting priorities - and forcing the state to live within its means - now and in the future.

This is good stewardship of your taxpayer dollars.

My dad and I operated a business together for a number of years and employed many families. Each year, we would throw a Christmas party. Besides thanking our employees for the fine work they did, it gave me an opportunity to see their families and reflect upon my responsibilities as an employer.

Every car payment, every house payment, money that paid for the education of their children, were all based on my ability to make good decisions that kept them employed. For me, the Christmas party was more of a reality check, because I came to realize all these people trusted in me with their livelihood.

The toughest part for me was if I had to lay someone off or reduce wages, because of an economic downturn, or I had made poor budget decisions. Making these decisions can be gut-wrenching.

Government needs to think in this same way. Every decision the Legislature makes affects you, the citizens of our state. Short-term fixes will have long-term repercussions. It's time to cut non-essential services to reduce spending.

So I'm asking you to pay close attention to the work of the Legislature, the governor and her administration as we address the budget challenges and other critical issues over the next four months and beyond.

Our commitment today as Republicans -- as Washingtonians -- is to hold up the principles of free-market solutions, not solutions that come from government bureaucracies; to preserve a free society, allowing our capitalistic economic system to correct itself. And to limit government to do only what the citizens cannot do for themselves.

We as Republicans are committed to these principles. Doing what is right -- NOT -- what is political should always be the standard.

We must soberly face the consequences of bad decisions made by state government. Answers to our current economic situation should not involve bail outs, but to cut spending and allow the free-market system that our nation was founded upon to work and flourish. As legislators we must remember that all the policy decisions we make in Olympia are paid for with revenues generated from a sound economy. It's been an honor to address you, the citizens of Washington.

Thank you!

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