



Donahue: Governor's Budget A 'Good Start'

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This morning, Commissioner of Administration Paul Rainwater presented Gov. Bobby Jindal's budget to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, and Sen. Jack Donahue (R-11), who serves on the Senate Finance Committee, said Jindal's proposals seem workable.

Facing a projected \$1.6 billion budget shortfall this year, the governor has proposed saving \$96 million by eliminating 4,000 state jobs; reducing administrative branch expenditures by \$110 million; and making \$410 million in strategic cuts to various state departments. In addition, the governor's proposed budget includes cutting costs by \$2.66 million through the consolidation of offices in one agency alone – the Department of Children and Family Services. A similar step at the Department of Environmental Quality will save \$1.8 million. Proposed changes to the state retirement system will save an estimated \$24 million.

Jindal's proposal includes increased funding for the Minimum Foundation Program, which funds local education systems, from \$3.31 billion to \$3.38 billion; contains \$174 million for TOPS; reduces the healthcare budget from \$8.27 billion to \$8.13 billion; and proposes no cuts in current Medicare provider rates, which will benefit our local hospitals.

"I think the governor's proposed budget is responsible in light of the anticipated shortfall," Donahue said. "As presented, it goes a long way towards protecting education and healthcare, while eliminating state positions in keeping with legislation we passed last year."

Donahue spearheaded the state Streamlining Commission, which recommended a reduction in the state payroll by eliminating jobs, largely through attrition.

While pleased with the overall proposal, Donahue also said he will not commit to supporting the governor's complete budget until he has thoroughly analyzed it.

"As we move forward, we will find things that aren't apparent on the surface," Donahue said. "Today's presentation did not contain sufficient detail for us to fully understand how the pieces all fit together, and was not entirely clear on some of the proposed budget cuts.

"Nonetheless, this is a substantial first effort and I look forward to delving into it more deeply."