



Committee on Accountable Government Review Iowa Legislature's Fiscal Year 2009 Budget

Prelude

This is a budgeting process review of the Iowa Legislature's FY 2009 budget. The goal of this review is to encourage the key fiscal policy developers and lawmakers of Iowa to consider these criteria in the future. These principles for Accountable

Government were developed by Iowa Taxpayers Association in 2003 and the practice of budget evaluation has continued regularly since then. **To be clear, it is not the purpose or intent of this effort to render subjective judgment or declaratory comment on the merits of individual programs sanctioned by the various legislative or executive department actions.**

Each of the Iowa Taxpayers Association's eight "Principles for Sound Budgeting" is listed below. Each principle is accompanied with examples, if applicable, from the Legislature's FY 2009 budget. Pursuant to our evaluation, a plus sign (+) indicates the Legislature's budget abided by the principle and a negative sign (-) indicates the Legislature's deviated from the principle.

Sound Budgeting Principles/Review

Avoid the use of one-time or time-limited sources for ongoing expenses.

- The Legislature's budget continuously relies upon the use of one-time and time-limited sources of revenue for ongoing general fund expenses. When those funds no longer exist, a gap as large as \$300 million in the budget will be present and a new revenue source will need to be identified to fund those expenditure commitments.
- The Legislature eliminated the requirement that an appropriation be made from the General Fund to the Cash Reserve Fund to maintain a minimum balance equal to 7.5% of the REC estimate for FY 2009.
- Medicaid, an ongoing expense, is funded in FY09 with \$ 111.8 million from the Senior Living Trust Fund (SLTF), a time-limited revenue source.
- An additional \$122.1 million in shifted general fund expenses are funded with the Senior Living Trust Fund.
- The Legislature maintains approximately \$40 million of shifted expenditures in the Environment First Fund.

Avoid implementing new programs for a partial fiscal year.

- + New programs have not been implemented for a partial fiscal year.

Avoid multi-year accelerating commitments.

- Provides a multi-year increase in the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program. This program increases the FY 2009 General Fund appropriations to the Student Achievement and Teacher Quality Program by \$75 million.
- Provides for a three-year accelerating commitment for “market factor salaries; For FY09 - \$7.5 million, and FY10 - \$6.6 million.

Avoid new automatic, or “standing,” appropriations.

- Expansion of the Hawk-I health program in the amount of \$4.8 million for FY 2009, \$14.8 million for FY 2010, and \$24.8 million for FY 2011

Accurately determine revenue and expenses.

- + The budget abides by this principle.

Align expenses and revenue in the same fiscal year.

- + Builds upon a performance based budgeting process, “Budgeting for Results.” The theory is to start with all revenues currently available and expend those resources only on the expenditures that achieve the most value and the ultimate goal identified by the State. Rather than building upon the current base budget, the Legislature has agreed with the Governor’s attempt to align available revenues to those identified expenses in the same fiscal year. As a practice, this is a good first step.
- Utilizes a minimum of \$99.8 million in the FY2008 ending fund balance to fund FY2009 expenditure for property tax credit funding and repayment to the Senior Living Trust Fund.

Avoid shifting program funding to property taxes or fees.

- Funds property tax credits below projected levels of demand with the exception of the military tax credit which was fully funded this year. Contrary to state law, the following property tax credits are under-funded by these percentages:

Homestead = under-funded by 29%

Ag Land and Family Farm = under-funded by 12%

- \$130.4 million was shifted from the Health Care Trust Fund for other uses.

Avoid diversion of funds statutorily authorized for a specific objective to other purposes.

- Diverts \$121 million from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund (RIIF) to non-infrastructure items. This diversion is contrary to existing law and has been accomplished through “notwithstanding” the statutory requirement.

The Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund is authorized by law for specific objectives and therefore we oppose the use of “notwithstanding” language which diverts resources from these funds.