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## Capitol Connection

By Senator Joe Leibham

### Why is it so Hard for Government to Stop Spending?

As you may recall, in last week's column I highlighted the fact that Governor Jim Doyle's 2009-11 state budget proposal took a major hit when he announced that, if his plan was approved as he presented it, the budget would fall about \$1.6 billion short of the revenue needed to cover expenditures.

One would think that an easy first step in balancing our budget during these challenging times would be to stop or delay any unnecessary spending or projects. Typically, this is what most businesses and families would do if they were facing a budget shortfall. Unfortunately, in state government, things are rarely easy.

A classic example of our state government's inability to say "no" to unnecessary spending is the proposed roundabout project on Highway 67 in Kiel.

Over the past few years, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) has planned a reconstruction project on State Highway 67 that would install two roundabouts in the City of Kiel. One roundabout would be constructed at the intersection of Highway 67 & Highway AA and another at Highway 67 & Highway 32. Both of these intersections are currently controlled effectively with four-way stop signs. The project is slated to begin in the next couple of weeks.



Recognizing the budget challenge that we face, the City Council and residents of Kiel humbly offered about 15 weeks ago to delay or cancel this project so that the state could save approximately \$2-3 million and help our government deal with the biggest budget deficit in the history of our state. I applaud the Kiel residents' willingness to support a delay in a project that is planned for their own community and I have been working to convince the Governor to accept their offer.

I wrote my first letter to Governor Doyle in February asking him to delay this project. In addition to my letter, the Kiel City Council sent the Governor a letter stating, "I am sure the voting public in the state would respond favorably to postponing our project and any others like it proposed at the present time around the state until such time as the state's budget is in far better shape. Such action would go far to get fiscal recovery and economic improvement jump-started and on its way."

I have also shared this cost-saving offer to the legislative chairmen of the Joint Finance Committee. Regretfully, despite the fact that our state has one of the largest budget deficits in the nation, we have not yet been able to convince the Governor to stop this unnecessary spending.

This is very frustrating and so telling. We are basically pleading with the Governor to halt an unnecessary and untimely project and save the state over \$2 million. This money could be spent on higher priority projects or better yet, saved. Stopping unnecessary spending, especially when we are facing a record deficit, should not be so hard.

While cancelling or delaying this project in Kiel will not solve the entire budget problem, I believe we must reduce spending and eliminate or delay all unnecessary projects when working to fix Wisconsin's massive budget deficit. I will continue my work to stop this project until the shovels break the ground and identify additional unnecessary state expenditures.

As always, it has been a pleasure communicating with you. Please remember to communicate with me and share your input by calling 888-295-8750, writing to me at P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882, or by e-mailing me at [Sen.Luibham@legis.wi.gov](mailto:Sen.Luibham@legis.wi.gov). You can also log on to the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District on-line office at [www.leibhamsenate.com](http://www.leibhamsenate.com).

It is an honor representing the residents of the 9<sup>th</sup> District in the State Senate.

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