

There are only two weeks left in the 2010 Session and the final bills are working their way through the system. Normally, most bills would have expenditures tied to them to fund new or expanded programs. However, this isn't a normal year. Talk of expanding programs or creating new ones has been rare. Many of us started this session with the goal of not spending any of the limited reserves we have and running government by the same standards we are expected to run our households and businesses - don't spend more than you make.

Last week we had a cracker barrel in Howard and I want to thank everyone who came out Sunday to meet with us. I really appreciate these "town hall meetings" as they allow me to hear directly from you. The most important question came in the simplest form, "How are you going to balance the budget?"

In the next two weeks you'll see which areas of the governor's proposed budget will be cut. The governor's budget proposal called for taking \$31.8 from our reserves to balance the 2011 budget. That amount is now expected to be closer to \$40 million due to sluggish revenues coming in even lower than originally projected.

Each state agency has given their budget request via public testimony before the appropriations committee. Now the appropriations committee will give recommendations to the rest of the Legislature and we must decide where to make cuts.

Running South Dakota in a more efficient manner, at every level, will be one guaranteed outcome of this session. I have said since the beginning of the session that cuts will be felt at every level across state government. I am not looking forward to making cuts to worthy programs, but we can't continue to live off reserves - those days are over.

Please pray for the men and women of the 211th serving our state and country.

Again, I must tell you that it is an honor to serve as your State Senator. Please contact me at sen.russelloolson@state.sd.us with any advice or concerns.

Respectfully,

Russell Olson
District 8 Senator