

# Letter-to-the-Editor Templates

## Budget Advocacy – January 2016

### **LTE 1:**

Some Republicans in the General Assembly seem determined to bring the ugly politics of Washington, DC to Harrisburg, and that is hurting Pennsylvania taxpayers, school children and those who need government services. The radical Republicans will not support raising new revenue, even opposing a severance tax, because they want to drastically reduce the resources and capacity of government.

These radicals are holding the state budget hostage to their extreme ideology. Most legislators, both Republican and Democrat, want to restore funding for education and human services, and they supported a budget compromise worked out between the governor and legislative leaders. But legislative leaders reneged on their compromise agreement and did not bring it up for a final vote.

We need a fiscally responsible budget that pays for critical investments in education and human services. The state faces a deficit of at least \$500 million this year and over \$2 billion next year. If we don't raise revenue this year we will see further cuts to education and health and human services next year.

It's time for the legislature to stop the stupid Washington-style politics and pass the compromise budget the members and the governor agreed to.

### **LTE 2**

Most Pennsylvanians agree that we need a government with the resources and capacity to deliver services that we cannot provide for ourselves - educate our children, protect the elderly, abused, disabled, addicted and those who our changing economy has left behind, and provide for public safety. And most Pennsylvania taxpayers are willing to pay for it.

We saw what happened to our schools when Governor Corbett cut funding for education by \$1 billion even as he cut corporate taxes. School districts laid off teachers, school nurses and guidance counselors and cut academic and extra-curricular programs. And they raised property taxes so taxpayers were left paying more for less education.

Recent polls consistently show that the public supports increased spending on education, human services and the environment, and they support modest increases in taxes, especially a severance tax on gas drillers.

Legislators are out of excuses – it's time to pass a responsible budget that starts to restore education funding and funding for human services and includes the revenue to pay for it.

### **LTE 3**

We want our legislators to live up to their promises to voters and to the compromise budget their leaders and Governor Wolf agreed to. And we don't want to wait until spring to finally get a budget for this fiscal year.

A bi-partisan compromise budget passed the Senate and was one step away from passing the House. The plan that passed the Senate is a genuine compromise. The overall spending level is almost exactly mid-way between that proposed by the Governor and that proposed by the Republicans.

Increased funding for education and human services was demanded by the citizens who elected Governor Wolf and many Republicans who promised to restore funding cut under Governor Corbett. The House Republican budget that finally passed and the governor line-item vetoed falls far short of providing adequate funding for education and human services.

Now legislators do not want to finish this year's budget at all in an election year before the April primaries. That political excuse is unacceptable. There is no reason for any further compromise or delay. We need to pass a budget based on the bi-partisan framework now!