

STATE NEWS

Sen. Orr, says because of timing cuts will be more like 20 percent

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On Friday, Governor Robert Bentley declared a 10.6 percent proration on the state's General Fund Budget for the remainder of fiscal year 2012, ending on September 30.

In his statement announcing the proration of the State's General Fund Budget, Governor Robert Bentley said, "We have pursued every possible option in order to avoid proration; however, this step must be taken. Just as families must reduce their spending when money is limited, government must also reduce its spending," Governor Bentley said. "We must live within our means, and we will make financial decisions that honor our commitment to taxpayers to keep a balanced budget."

The deep cuts announced by the Governor are in fact more consequential than the ten percent stated.

"This is a significant step by Governor Bentley to deal with the tremendous shortfall we are going to be facing," said Sen. Arthur Orr (R-Decatur).

Orr who serves as the Chairperson for Finance and Taxation General Fund Committee explained that 10 percent in rough math is actually a 20 percent cut because there is not time to spread the cuts over a full year.

"If you look at the fiscal 2013 budget we have approximately \$367 million more on top of what the Governor did on Friday, to cut," said Orr, "These next 18 months are going to see more than \$500 million cut from a \$1.8 billion dollar state budget.

The deep cuts will effect all state agencies with the exception of the court which under the State Constitution must retain 85 percent of their budget.

The Governor has said that everyone will have to live within their means, this is not an idea that sit well with many in the state bureaucracies, while others have been preparing all along.

Orr points to the State Department of Mental Health as an agency that has worked to be prepared for proration.

"I believe the Department of Mental health is a good example of an agency that has been prepared [for proration]" said Orr. "[Commissioner] Baugh has done a good job preparing her agency to deal with what they are facing."

Orr says that too many times in the past the government has "cried wolf" concerning proration and budget cuts, only to find an eleventh hour solution.

"There is no indication that a BP settlement is going to happen. nothing on the horizon to fix the problem," said Orr.

A bill filed on the Thursday before the Governor declared prorations will seek to keep the Department of Corrections from mandatory cuts. The supplemental bill sponsored by Orr will be heard by the Legislature when it returns to Montgomery on Tuesday. The bill will keep approximately \$45 million flowing to the department allowing corrections to continue to function.

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