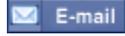


# **FRANKLIN COUNTY TIMES**

## **‘Rightsizing’ is not an answer, it is a cop-out**

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By Rep. Craig Ford

The new leadership in Montgomery has been quick to pat themselves on the back for their performance since they took total control of our state government in 2010.

But what has the Republican Supermajority really accomplished?

Since the Republicans took over, our state has lost thousands of jobs, many of them critical public sector jobs in education and mental health.

The Republicans cut take-home pay and benefits for teachers, law enforcement officers and firefighters, among other public employees.

The Republicans closed four mental health facilities and seventeen veterans affairs offices across Alabama.

This month, state officials reported that Alabama’s unemployment rate is once again climbing.

But that has not stopped our leaders in Montgomery from patting themselves on the back or claiming that they have created thousands of jobs.

Recently, we have been hearing some leaders in Montgomery throw around the word “rightsizing.”

This is their term to describe their plan to push even more cuts to critical government agencies and services in the name of “streamlining” or “consolidating” government services.

This year state budgets were cut to the very bone and then some.

Because of their inaction, the state Medicaid program may collapse, putting at risk the health of every citizen in this state (even those who have health insurance).

The Republicans failed to lead on Medicaid and instead passed the buck to the voters of Alabama, forcing the voters of Alabama to have to vote on an amendment to fund Medicaid and other critical state functions.

All of us understand the need to tighten the belt in times like these.

But if money has been so tight that we have to tighten the belt at the expense of our children's schools or public health, then why did the leadership try to pass a massive tax "incentives" bill that would have allowed corporations to keep their employees income taxes?

Why do we have to tighten our belts so tightly when corporations like ExxonMobile pay little or no state income taxes because of exclusive tax loopholes?

If we can afford corporate tax breaks, then why can't we afford to fund our schools or Medicaid?

Ask any parent out there if they think their children's classroom needs to be "rightsized."

Alabamians understand that we must sacrifice in tough times. We understand the need to "tighten our belts."

But while we are tightening our belts, Republican leaders are busy pushing (or protecting) handouts to corporations.

Now the Republican leadership wants more cuts to our schools, our police and firefighters, the Department of Corrections and Medicaid — all in the name of "rightsizing."

Alabama's working families have been asked to sacrifice enough. These cuts are costing us an entire generation of Alabamians. "Rightsizing" is not an answer; it is a cop-out.

*Rep. Craig Ford is a Democrat from Gadsden and the Minority Leader of the State House of Representatives. He has served in the Alabama House of Representatives since 2000.*