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Malloy Calls for Governor, Legislative Leaders to Negotiate Budget in "The Light of Day"

Posted by Team Malloy @ March 25, 2010 - 3:06pm

Democratic candidate for Governor and former Stamford Mayor Dan Malloy today released the following statement:

"I'm calling on the Governor to do today what I'd do if I were Governor. Call the legislative leaders into a negotiating session and allow members of the media (traditional and new media both) to sit in. I'd put my ideas on the table, and I'd ask each of them to do the same. I'd see how far apart we are and then I'd start trying to move us to consensus, and I'd do it in public.

"I know this suggestion is going to be dismissed by some as 'grandstanding' or me not understanding how the Legislature works. Neither is the case. They're stuck, and they not getting un-stuck. They can't keep doing what they've been doing. Passing deficit mitigation packages that you know are going to be vetoed by the Governor gets you nowhere. Similarly, passing a deficit mitigation package in one chamber knowing it has no chance of passing in the other chamber – but doing it anyway – also gets you nowhere. And while trying to gain the upper hand by selectively leaking to the press parts of conversations that were held in private meetings might be fun, it too gets you nowhere. Which is exactly where we are: nowhere.

"Let's be clear about what's going on with the budget deficit. This is a bipartisan train wreck that is going to be solved by political grandstanding. This deficit is not cyclical, not primarily the result of the recession, and not revenue-driven. And, because the state doesn't abide by GAAP the way it requires cities and towns to, the actual deficit is a lot worse than what most people think.

"This deficit is deep and structural – the cumulative result of long-term spending increases, underfunded liabilities and borrowing plus a state government that is top heavy and too top down. In other words, it's the result of a lot of bad decisions that were made over a long period of time by both parties. But, ironically, since it's everyone's fault, there's no one person or entity that should be blamed. Meaning there's no 'good guy,' no 'bad guy,' no finger pointing. Just a collective

acknowledgment that the problem needs to be fixed, now.

"So, what do we do? First, we need to reduce the cost of state government. There's no way around it.


"Since we're going to have to make cuts, I'd start by asking each of us to cut political appointee staff by 15 percent. You can't ask others what you're not willing to do yourself. Since we each have a place where we'd draw the line, I'd draw mine first: no cuts to the most vulnerable people in Connecticut – those who are served by the community non-profits. People with disabilities, seniors in our nursing homes, people who suffer from debilitating mental illness, children who are at risk, and the other people served by these providers. Then I'd ask each of the legislative leaders to do the same with the constituencies they want to protect, hoping that there'd be some common ground there.

"And then, with everything else on the table – and I mean everything – we'd each have to suggest cuts and advocate efficiencies. No one likes to, but everyone has to. But, since we'd be doing it in public, my sense is there'd be a lot less of the 'he said, she said' stuff that's been going on lately. I don't want to look like that when everyone's watching.

"And, because being Governor is about leadership, I'd start by suggesting that we look at state government as a whole. I'd bring to the table the ideas state employee labor leaders have been carrying around for the last two years, and where I think the efficiencies and cuts make sense, I'd propose them so the legislative leaders wouldn't have to. I'd be willing to take that heat. Where I don't think their ideas make sense, I'd prove to them that they're wrong, and then I'd tell them to come back with new ideas that hit the same dollar amounts. I'd take that hit, too. Then I'd put some other ideas on the table, like merging the state's four economic development agencies into one department (if we can be dead last in job growth with all four of them in existence, we can't do any worse with just one agency). To be clear, I have no interest in laying people off. We're not even done absorbing the impact of the early retirements, and putting people out of work is never smart. I'd also suggest freezing compensation for all political appointees, and I'd want to look for ways to stop providing cars for state employees other than the five constitutional officers and law enforcement (people can be reimbursed for official use of their personal cars).

"Then I'd ask legislative leaders for their ideas.

"As Yogi Berra once said, 'It gets late early around here.'"

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