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Senate of Pennsylvania

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MAJORITY POLICY

December 21, 2015

Joseph Scarnati
President Pro Tempore
292 Main Capitol Building

Jake Corman
Majority Leader
350 Main Capitol Building

Patrick Browne
Appropriations Committee Chairman
281 Main Capitol Building

Dear Senate Leaders:

It is now December 21st, and in a few days our Commonwealth will unfortunately set a new record for the longest budgetary impasse in state history. We will also be nearly a full six months beyond the statutory requirement to enact a general appropriations bill.

Like every member, I have been receiving significant feedback from the people of my senatorial district. They have been consistent throughout the impasse: do not raise taxes, enact reforms that control costs and improve program performance, and responsibly manage the existing resources of state government.

Consistent with the views of the people from Lancaster County, I voted against Senate Bill 1073, a compromise "budget framework" struck with Governor Wolf that would have raised taxes and increased spending beyond the current rate of inflation. The justification provided for this agreement was that Governor Wolf would agree to sign into law public sector pension reform, as well as some form of liquor modernization/privatization.

As you are well aware, this past weekend the "budget framework" agreed to by Governor Wolf and House and Senate leaders appears to have collapsed by the House overwhelmingly defeating public sector pension reform legislation.

While I respect the work that has been done in an attempt to find common ground with a Governor who has recklessly put our Commonwealth in harm's way after vetoing several spending plans, I believe it is now time that we put aside those issues which encapsulated the "budget framework" and squarely focus on enacting an appropriations bill that will provide immediate relief to our school districts, human service providers, and to all those who depend upon state and federal monies for continued operations.

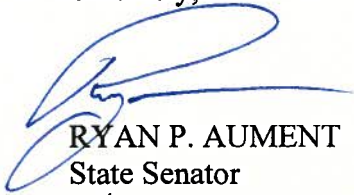
Clearly, the people of Pennsylvania – as expressed through their elected representatives - have taken the position that public sector pension reform is not worth the price of additional taxes to support more government spending, and we cannot, and should not, ignore them.

I encourage my Republican leadership to work towards a plan that protects taxpayers and provides immediate relief, whether that is through a revised 2015-16 budget, set apart from the "budget framework," or a stopgap funding mechanism. Further delay is unacceptable to me and my constituents.

In the end, we need not be victim to any Governor who would use situations like these to advance tax and spend policies that are inconsistent with the majority view of the General Assembly. The people expect and deserve for us to stand with them, which is what I hope the Senate will do.

Together, let's complete our work for 2015 and advocate for an agenda in 2016 to focus state policy on building a stronger Pennsylvania by promoting individual freedom, strong families, vibrant communities, high quality schools and the free enterprise system.

Sincerely,



RYAN P. AUMENT
State Senator
36th Senatorial District

RPA/jgs