

# COMMUNITY

## State budgeting, euthanasia Rep. McMillan's top-billed items

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**MONTGOMERY** — State budgeting and euthanasia of dogs and cats are among the top-ics Rep. Steve McMillan, R-Bay Minette, is ready to take on in the current session of the Alabama Legislature.

With legislators believing this is the worst economic time in

the state's history, McMillan said some things are going to have to change.

"The economy in this state is probably the worst it's been since I arrived in 1980," he said.

The state has two main budgets: The Education Trust Fund and the General Fund.

"Alabama had the largest ETF budget in the state's history just two years ago,"

**“** We have lost \$1.5 billion in revenue. The Legislature made a big mistake when times were good by using one-time revenue and too much new revenue to meet recurring expenses. When revenue fell, we had no way to replace those sources of revenue.

Rep. Steve McMillan

**”**

McMillan said.

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With the ETF in its third straight year of proration, or budget cuts Gov. Robert Bentley has ordered 3 percent proration in this year's spending.

"I predict legislative decisions will focus on saving jobs, which will

not be an easy task," McMillan said.

The General Fund has also taken a big hit over the last few years—something McMillan would like to see changed. He admits it might take time.

"There is no silver bullet, quick fix approach to this problem," he said.

The General Fund makes little revenue from growth taxes such as the income tax and sales tax.

Insurance premiums are the No. 1 source of revenue for the General Fund.

McMillan believes a

major change in state budgeting may be coming during the next few weeks.

"I predict we will adopt a new process, which will eliminate adopting budgets based on revenue estimates." He said. "Instead, the maximum revenue estimate will be based on the previous year with growth estimates capped at the average growth for the last 15 years."

McMillan admitted that this step may not completely fix the problem, but said, "It will be much more responsible and should eliminate proration as a frequent occurrence."

Budget cuts are not the only thing on McMillan's agenda.

He is sponsoring a bill that would eliminate the use of gas

chambers to euthanize dogs and cats in animal shelters.

"Bill 147 has gained a lot of support and will have a Senate companion," he said. "The only reason it has not been introduced is because there has been a lot of people wanting to co-sign the bill."

The Senator sponsoring the bill will wait till later in the week to introduce the bill.

McMillan said he also wants to introduce legislation that would increase punishment for the people who harm, abuse or kill children.

*Troy University journalism student Mikal Hensley of Fairhope wrote this story as part of a project partly funded by the Alabama Press Association Journalism Foundation.*



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