



Delaware House of Representatives House Majority Caucus

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PROPOSED OPERATING BUDGET PRINTED AND READY FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

Democrats' push for open government results in budget made available week before vote

DOVER – After years of the state's more than \$3 billion budget being introduced hours before it is voted upon, the proposed fiscal 2011 spending plan is available for public review a full week before it comes to the floor for a vote.

The push for increased transparency came from House Speaker Rep. Robert F. Gilligan, who as a member of the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC), called for the panel to move its meeting up four days to allow the budget to be printed and publicly available a week earlier than it normally would. By law, state budget writers must use DEFAC's June revenue estimates to craft the budget. DEFAC normally would have met today, but Rep. Gilligan pushed for the council to meet on Thursday, June 17.

"The public and several legislators have been clear in recent years that we must increase government transparency," said Rep. Gilligan, D-Sherwood Park, the lead sponsor of a law subjecting the General Assembly to the state's open meeting laws.

"Introducing a 200-page budget two days before it is voted on is not open government. The public has no chance to review the document before legislators vote on it. By having the budget printed and introduced a week earlier, it will be available for the public to review and raise any concerns they might have before we take a vote. I hope we've set a new precedent for having the budget introduced earlier.

"I want to thank Joshua Martin, chair of DEFAC, the members of the DEFAC, the members of the Joint Finance Committee and its co-chairs, Sen. Nancy Cook and Rep. Dennis Williams. Without all of their hard work, we would not be in this position today."

The 228-page budget, Senate Bill 310, is the result of months of public hearings and open discussions by the Joint Finance Committee, a bipartisan committee of six senators and six representatives.

“We have spent the past six months going agency by agency, and in some cases, line by line, to squeeze every dollar we could out of this budget,” said JFC co-chair Rep. Dennis P. Williams, D-Wilmington North. “We worked long hours to make sure that we have a responsible budget that maintains state services to protect our most vulnerable citizens while making government operate as efficiently as possible. I look forward to a final vote and passage of the budget.”

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