

Governor: Agencies need to lower budgets

State departments to reduce requests because of economy

By Andrew Dowd
Leader-Telegram staff

State agencies, some with Eau Claire offices, have one month to decide how they can manage a 10 percent cut in their budgets for the next two years.

Gov. Jim Doyle said Wednesday that state departments need to submit reduced budget requests because the troubled economy has affected the amount of revenues the government can expect in 2009-2011.

"Agencies are going to have to carefully scrutinize what they're doing and come up with clear, executable plans," State Budget Director Dave Schmiedicke said.

In prior budget cycles, Schmiedicke said Doyle would instruct departments to create a budget request with a 10 percent cut as an "exercise" to determine priorities and how they could run more efficiently. This time, it is being done for real.

Joe Polasek, budget director for the Department of Natural Resources, said his agency is starting to prepare a reduced budget, but did not yet know how it would affect service to customers in Eau Claire or throughout the state.

But for the DNR, Polasek said the 10 percent cut in state funding would not affect the department's



Doyle

2009-2011 request by about \$4.3 million.

Doyle's budget instructions issued in June said he wants agencies to make the cut without layoffs, if possible, though it may mean a reduction in positions.

Polasek said he doesn't yet know what the cut would mean to the DNR's staff.

"I guess we'll find out," he said.

All state agencies have until Nov. 17 to submit a reduced budget, which will then be compared to the latest

projections in state revenues.

Though the governor mentioned a 10 percent cut at a press conference this week at the Capitol, he had put it in his budget guidelines sent in June to agency directors.

"We were well aware of that," UW System Spokesman David Giroux said.

The current economic climate is much different than it was when the last budget was made two years ago, he said, and the UW System acknowledges that it will have to do its part to make the next budget work.

But along with the need to cut back on expenses, Giroux said there will be more people seeking help from higher education to get training if they need a new career after getting laid off.

"An economic situation like this will likely create new demands on

our institutions," he said.

Department requests came in at about \$2 billion above the base budget from the 2007-09 budget biennium, Schmiedicke said.

The governor's budget instructions handed to agencies in June said they should not expect an increase in general purpose revenues, but there were some exceptions. Doyle said public schools can expect continued two-thirds state funding, the UW System can pursue an economic expansion agenda and programs involving entitlements should count on funding for increasing caseloads.

The governor announced Wednesday that revenues were up only 0.4 percent in the first three months of this fiscal year.

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The Associated Press contributed to this article.



Staff photo by Dan Reiland

Dr. Kamal Thapar, a Marshfield Clinic neurosurgeon and director of the Brain & Spine Institute at Sacred Heart Hospital, explained the hospital's new "smart" approach to brain and spine surgery Thursday.

Surgery gets 'smart'

System aids with complex procedures

By Christena T. O'Brien
Leader-Telegram staff

"Did you get it all?"

It's a question Dr. Kamal Thapar hears often from patients' families, but the Marshfield Clinic neurosurgeon hasn't been able to provide that certainty — until now.

Thapar, director of the Brain & Spine Institute at Sacred Heart Hospital, expects to be operating on his first patient using the hospital's new Smart OR surgical suite by mid-November.

"It's a very exciting concept," said Thapar, who traveled to other hospitals in the United States and Europe to look at other systems in use.

Sacred Heart is the first hospital in the country to use this technology configuration for both surgery and diagnostics.

The suite — part of a \$6.2 million project that has been in the works

for six years — includes a configuration of advanced imagery and mapping technology, which will help Thapar and Dr. Phillip Porter, a neurosurgeon at OakLeaf Medical Network, perform complex brain and spine procedures in a more effective way.

The delicacy of such surgeries can be compared to walking on a tightrope, said Thapar, also the hospital's director of tertiary care.

"Imagine navigating a tightrope blindfolded," he said. "If you deviate off that path, even slightly, you fall. In surgery, the Smart OR is the ultimate tool ensuring we don't 'fall.' The technology goes beyond what the human eye can see, removing that blindfold."

The Smart OR — on the hospital's second floor — features a probe the surgeon can use to pinpoint his exact location during surgery and

If You Go

What: Celebrate Your Cerebrum Brain Fest at Sacred Heart Hospital.

When: 2 to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Where: Sacred Heart Hospital, 900 W. Clairemont Ave.

Why: To celebrate the hospital's new Smart OR surgical system. Tours will be given during the free event, which also will include Mensa tests, a quiz bowl, spelling bees and brain-themed giveaways.

intra-operative magnetic resonance imaging — or iMRI — which uses a magnetic field and radio waves to create cross-sectional images of a patient's head and body.

In the past, a patient was required to undergo an MRI or a computerized tomography — or CT — scan after surgery to determine the procedure's success or the need for more surgery. Rather than clos-

■ Sacred Heart Hospital is planning to add an intra-operative computerized tomography, or CT, scan operating suite next year.

ing up a surgical site, moving the patient to the magnet and possibly having to do another surgery, the magnet can now be moved to the patient on a ceiling-mounted track before surgery is completed.

In addition, real-time images are captured with what is essentially a global positioning system for the brain and a high-magnification microscope. All of the imagery is managed via a surgical mapping system called the BrainSUITE, which provides easy access to data — even scans of patients done at other medical facilities — throughout procedures that allows the surgical team to quickly reference information on flat screens mounted in the operating room.

See SURGERY, Page 3B

Cadott schools leader to retire

Superintendent to be done in July

By Chris Vetter
Chippewa Falls News Bureau

After 15 years with the Cadott school district, Superintendent Guy Habeck plans to retire at the end of the school year.

Habeck told the Cadott school board on Monday that he plans to retire at the end of July, when he is 60.

During his tenure at Cadott, Habeck said he brought programs like 4-year-old kindergarten, smaller class sizes for grades K-3, and high-performance history and calculus courses to the district.



Habeck

"I'm going to miss the kids, I'm going to miss the activities, and working with the teachers," Habeck said. "But I'm staying in the community, so I'm not going away. I'm not going into hibernation or anything like that."

School board member Brian Dulmes has worked alongside Habeck for the past five years.

"He's a good man to work with," Dulmes said. "He knew his trade well, and he'll be missed."

The retirement wasn't a big surprise, Dulmes said.

"We had hints it would be coming," he said.

The board will have the rest of the year to collect applications and find a replacement, Dulmes said.

"It's part of why he did it (now), so we wouldn't be stuck in a bad position," he said.

Dulmes said Habeck has a good sense of humor, and would always listen to what other people had to say.

"He's very organized, he's very thorough," Dulmes said. "He never would overlook the details. He worked hard to save the district money that way."

Habeck has been in education for 38 years. Prior to coming to Cadott, he was superintendent in the Bayfield school district for three years and principal for 11 years in the Mosinee and Florence County school districts.

Habeck said he and his wife, Kathie, decided to stay in the area because they are involved with the Lion's Club, church and other community activities.

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Warm the Children program enters 15th year

By Alyssa Waters
Leader-Telegram staff

With fall here and winter looming, the Leader-Telegram is asking people to open their wallets to keep children warm.

The newspaper-sponsored Warm the Children program — in its 15th year — uses community contributions to buy new warm clothing for children in need at one of three participating stores — Sears, ShopKo and Kohl's.

"This is one good thing that we feel the Leader-Telegram can do for the community, the needy families," said

■ Tax-deductible contributions to the Eau Claire Leader-Telegram-sponsored Warm the Children program, which buys warm clothing for area children in need, can be sent to Warm the Children, P.O. Box 570, Eau Claire, WI 54702-0570.

Mike Carlson, Leader-Telegram communications director and Warm the Children project coordinator. "One hundred percent of the donated dollars goes to the program."

The program served 582 children in 2006 and 614 in 2007. Last year about \$60,000 was raised.

Unfortunately, because of widespread financial strain, more families may be in need this year than in

previous years, Carlson said.

"Donations are in line with last year, but I'm a little concerned ... I already know that we have more needy families than we did last year," he said. "The need is up. I just hope that the money continues to come in."

Through the program, each child is able to shop for \$100 worth of new clothes. First children are fitted

with winter coats, hats, mittens and boots. If those needs have been met, sweaters and other warm clothing can be purchased.

Service organizations from Chippewa, Dunn and Eau Claire counties identify qualifying families and refer them to Warm the Children.

Although the program served more than 600 children last year, the need in the Chippewa Valley is never met completely. Last year about 200 children were left on the waiting list, Carlson said.

"We serve as many as we can," he said.