

We're facing one of the toughest economic situations in decades.

Our current budget situation is no short-term cash flow problem to solve. This is a serious, deep, and long-term economic situation to face up to.

Today's vote is the first disappropriation in a series of actions where we start scaling back – in some cases we'll postpone; In others, we need to cut, to restructure, to save.

These budget reductions are money authorized but not spent – and money we no longer have to spend. We're registering savings from what we started holding back months ago, and spending. We're stopping now.

This bill, and subsequent bills, are necessary, and the choices needed to balance budgets will be hard.

We asked last November for cut recommendations from all agencies equal to 5 percent of their 2007-2009 budgets. We are asking the same of ourselves. This amounts to a quarter of our budget for the rest of this biennium.

With many budget cuts in our future, I think it's an important statement that we, the legislature, take our own budget cuts as the first.

We often vote on bills that have lots of sponsors, and advocates, and enthusiasts, and the carrier will proudly and enthusiastically ask for the support of her colleagues. I ask for your vote, but I won't put a happy face on it; it's just the first in some of the hardest and most important work we'll be doing here this year.