



news release

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CONTACTS: Jennifer Munt • 651-287-0575 work • 651-357-8544 cell

PUBLIC EMPLOYEE UNION RESPONDS TO STATE OF THE STATE Public Employees Are the Solution, Not the Problem

Below is a statement from AFSCME Council 5, a union of 43,000 public and non-profit workers in Minnesota, including 19,000 state employees.

Today Gov. Pawlenty talked about loons and lutefisk with few details of how he plans to move the state out of deficit and into prosperity. In fact, his plan to cut corporate taxes in half could drive the state's \$5 billion deficit up to \$6 billion.

"Gov. Pawlenty understands the boardroom, not the lunchroom," says AFSCME Council 5 Director Eliot Seide. "He's looking for more ways to help wealthy CEOs while families are losing their jobs, their homes and their health care. Instead of more corporate bailouts, we should be raising revenue with fair taxes on folks who earn more than \$250,000."

Gov. Pawlenty also proposed freezing all state employee wages for the next two years, plus a similar wage freeze for all local governments that accept state funding. Seide responds, "Union wages and benefits are not the cause of the budget deficit. If the Governor cut all state employees, it would reduce Minnesota's budget by only 4 percent."

"Like most Minnesotans, public employees live paycheck to paycheck," says AFSCME Council 5 President Mike Buesing. "By freezing our wages, the Governor is freezing our spending, which fuels economic recovery. Our wages and job security should be negotiated, not mandated."

"Our public sector workforce is one of the leanest and most productive in the nation," explains Seide. "We welcome the opportunity to work with any public employer to provide even better services at a lower price."

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