



Gov. John Carney at a Budget Reset meeting (3/8) in the Carlisle Fire Hall in Milford. The event was sponsored by State Reps. Harvey Kenton, Charlie Postles, Dave Wilson & Bobby Outten with State Sen. Gary Simpson.

NEWS:

Candid Conversation at Community Budget Meetings

With Gov. John Carney preparing a plan to close a projected \$350 million projected shortfall in the next operating budget, he and state legislators continue to hold "Budget Reset" meetings throughout Delaware to gather citizen input.

So far, eight events have been held. *(See list below for upcoming meetings.)*

Delaware is currently challenged by flat revenue growth and costs driven by an influx of new public school students (including higher percentages of special-needs students); higher Medicaid costs; and escalating health coverage expenses for state employees, retirees, and others.

While the governor has not disclosed what will be included in the budget package he is expected to unveil on or around March 23, statements he has made at recent community meetings in Seaford, Lewes and Milford may provide some indication:

- "The best solution to the problems we have is stronger economic growth."
- "You don't want to do anything that affects growing your economy because ultimately, that is the solution to the problem."
- "Education is the most important investment we can make to improve our economy."
- The governor said the state needs to do a better job of producing graduating students with skills that employers need and value. "I can't tell you how many people I talk to that can't find a good welder. Can't find a good diesel mechanic."
- "If we have one-percent greater economic growth, and a one-percent reduction in health care costs, that solves a lot of [our fiscal] problems."
- On the issue of state employee/retiree health care costs, the governor said: "We're going to have a discussion about the trajectory of health care costs, which is unsustainable."
- "The hardest conversation I am going to have over the next year will be with state employees over health care costs."
- "I'd be willing to cut a deal [with state employees] that if we save a dollar in health care costs, I'll give you back 50 cents [in wages]."
- While not opposed to the concept of consolidating Delaware's 19 school districts, the governor said he did not know if "it was worth the political fight it would take to get it done."
- On shifting costs to county governments and school districts: "It doesn't make a lot of sense to me to fix a fiscal problem for the state and create a problem on the local level."
- "What I am thinking about is not doing something to fix [state finances] this year that makes it more difficult next year."
- "We've got to find a 'new normal' for state government and the state budget."
- In response to citizens who applauded his statement that the unpopular budget proposals made by outgoing Gov. Jack Markell in January were dead, Gov. Carney said: "My guess is that there is going to be a lot in our budget you are not going to like either."
- The governor promised to hold new, separate public meetings on the issues of marijuana legalization and state employee health care benefits.

To offer budget ideas online, [click here](#).

To access the "Budget Reset" handout provided to those attending the meetings, [click here](#).

Upcoming Meetings

Events held following the introduction of the governor's budget proposals will shift to examining those recommendations.

- **7:00 p.m. - March 16** - Thomas McKean High School, Wilmington, hosted by Reps. Deborah Hudson, Joseph Miro and Mike Ramone
- **8:00 a.m. - April 5** - Caffé Gelato, Newark, hosted by Rep. Paul Baumbach
- **6:00 p.m. - April 10** - Delaware State Police: Troop 3, Camden, hosted by Rep. Lyndon Yearick
- **7:30 a.m. - April 11** - ChesDel Restaurant, Middletown, hosted by Rep. Kevin Hensley
- **7:30 p.m. - April 26** - Rose Hill Community Center, New Castle, hosted by Sen. Margaret Rose Henry and Rep. J.J. Johnson