

Lawmaker Proposes Change to Help Public to See Budgets Earlier

For More Information, Contact:
For Immediate Release:

Joe Fulgham 302-744-4184
Thursday, May 13, 2010

State Rep. Greg Lavelle (R-Sharples) introduced a bill today designed to help ensure the public gets an opportunity to examine the state's budget bills before they're enacted.

"My bill (House Bill 411) would mandate that the Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council (DEFAC) issue its last financial forecast no later than June 15th each year," Rep. Lavelle said.

The Delaware Economic and Financial Advisory Council is a non-partisan group of lawmakers, financial analysts and business officials who estimate state revenue. By law, the state can only spend 98-percent of projected revenue, so the forecasts directly impact the shape and size of the operating and capital budgets. The group issues six forecasts annually, including monthly reports in March, April, May, and June. The June estimate is used to make last minute adjustments to the state's spending plans, which take effect at the start of the new fiscal year July 1st.

"DEFAC currently meets on the third Monday of the month," Rep. Lavelle said. "This means their last report can come out as early as June 15th or as late as June 21st. The operating and capital budgets can't be finalized and printed until this forecast is issued. House Bill 411 would reform this needlessly arbitrary aspect of our budget procedures and provide predictability from one year to the next."

Rep. Lavelle has long championed the early release of the state's spending bills. His latest attempts – House Bills 13 and 84 – were introduced in early 2009. Both measures seek to require that the state's operating and capital budgets be introduced at least a few days in advance of being voted on by the General Assembly. The bills have been bottled-up in the House Administration Committee for more than a year.

"One of the criticisms of my bills has been that if the June DEFAC forecast falls late, it becomes very difficult to make the needed adjustments and get the budgets printed and introduced early," Rep. Lavelle said. "I've always maintained that was a lame excuse because there was nothing preventing us from issuing the last revenue estimate a little earlier. "

In fact, last month, Speaker of the House Bob Gilligan (D-Sherwood Park) requested that the DEFAC move this year's reporting date from June 21st to June 17th - a request the council approved.

"I applaud the Speaker for his action," Rep. Lavelle said. "Since he independently came to the same conclusion that I did – that DEFAC can modestly tweak its June reporting to improve the budgetary process – I'm hopeful he'll look on this bill kindly and lend his assistance to moving it quickly to the House floor for consideration."

Rep. Lavelle added that action on his new bill should clear the way for the release of his bills (House Bills 13 and 84) calling for the early filing of the state's spending plans. "Together, these three bills will permanently provide some transparency to a budget process that has too often been viewed with suspicion."

###