

Letter to the Editor

It's well known that the Minnesota Legislature is working diligently on the next two-year state budget—a complex and essential task. A major challenge they face is planning for potential future deficits. By law, the Legislature must pass the biennial budget by June 30, 2025, to prevent a government shutdown, which would ultimately affect just about everyone. We appreciate our representatives' dedication and commitment to serving the people of Minnesota.

Often, people ask: What does county government really do? The answer is: a lot—and much of it is required by state law. It's estimated that about 90% of county work involves carrying out state-required programs and services. These include health and human services, law enforcement, county jails, elections, roads and bridges – and other critical services that affect every Minnesotan. The state often provides partial funding for these services and counties rely on that financial support to keep vital services running.

However, with a state deficit on the horizon, these services will still need to be delivered, but the cost burden may increasingly fall to local property taxpayers. This has serious implications, especially for smaller, rural counties, where property tax increases can hit hardest. Over and above that, counties must also manage their own increasing expenses for wages, health insurance, infrastructure, and individual local needs.

County Commissioners across Minnesota, along with the Association of Minnesota Counties, are actively engaging with state lawmakers to raise awareness about the risks of shifting costs to local taxpayers. We are thankful for the hard work of our elected representatives and remain committed to working together to find solutions that keep Minnesota strong. This is challenging work, but it's essential for the health of our communities—and it's vital for taxpayers to understand these complexities so we can all play a role in finding responsible, sustainable solutions.