

Senator Fonfara, Representative Berger and members of the Finance Committee, my name is Bill Buhler. I am a member of CSEA and I am here to focus attention on our economic problems and propose a solution.

As you may know, Connecticut wages have been stagnant for at least 13 years. Consumer spending money has been depleted, keeping a damper on sales tax revenue and job creation.

During the same years large corporations and the very wealthy have continued to rake in large income gains. This divergence has given Connecticut the biggest income gap and with it a case of economic immobility. Families eager to spend don't have the money, and those with the money have no reason to spend.

The solution? -Connecticut should embrace the example set by Minnesota. Faced with a budget shortfall in 2013, the Governor raised taxes to 9.85% on the top 2%, closed corporate tax loopholes, broadened the corporate tax base, adjusted sales taxes and cut property taxes by 9.7%. Based on multiple categories of competitiveness, Minnesota is now the top state for business. Its economy is rated 5th best nationally. Quality of life is rated as 3rd best due to low unemployment and a low crime rate, and it wins 2nd place for scholastic achievement.

Progressive tax changes like Minnesota's work for Connecticut because they put more money in the hands of those most likely to spend. Connecticut has taken steps in this direction and should embrace it fully.

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