

To the Editor:

As the governor and legislature continue to work their way toward a solution to the state's current budget deficit, one proposal that is quietly gathering momentum deserves a great deal more scrutiny than it is currently receiving.

In 2006, Governor Pawlenty and many of these same legislators created a stable source of funding for local fire departments. With a surcharge dedicated to fire safety on home and business insurance premiums, local fire departments were guaranteed a stable source of funding for their training. For the average homeowner in the state, the surcharge amounted to around \$5 a year, so it was hailed as a transparent and painless way to ensure that the state's fire fighters were adequately funded.

Having already tapped the majority of the rainy day and reserve funds in previous bad economic times, this year the Governor and Legislature have turned their gaze to this account as a short term fix to a long term problem.

Minnesota home and business owners pay into this account each year with the promise that the money will be used for training fire fighters. And in the first few years, the surcharge has worked at providing training dollars to hundreds of departments around the state. Undeterred by the unseemly appearances, the Governor and Legislature are planning to turn this dedicated surcharge into a new tax on property owners, who will then also likely see their property taxes increase as the need for training shifts from a state to a local budget issue.

Add Local department information here

– use of fire marshal staff, training needs, reimbursement?

With the vast majority of the state's fire fighters being volunteers, adequate training funds can literally be the difference between life and death, not only for the fire fighter, but also for anyone who may someday need a fire fighter to respond to their emergency.

If you are outraged by the Governor and legislators taking the fee you pay for fire protection and using it for who knows what, you should let them know that they need to find a way to fix the budget without literally playing with fire.

Sincerely,

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE