

Thissen: More vision needed in St. Paul

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MARSHALL - Minnesota's next governor will deal with a budget deficit and a recovering economy, but must do so with more vision than what's been used in the past, said Rep. Paul Thissen, DFL-Minneapolis, and candidate for governor.

A governor and his administration and Legislature can't just make cuts in the budget and move money from one area to another to solve a budget crisis, said Thissen, who made a campaign stop in Marshall on Tuesday.

"Unless there is a broader discussion on who we want to be as a people," Thissen said the budget and related issues won't be resolved for the long term.

While he agrees with Republican Gov. Tim Pawlenty's statements that health care costs are increasing at an unsustainable rate, Thissen disagrees with Pawlenty's approach.

Recent cuts in General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC) mean more people will be without insurance, because the cuts in the long run mean more expensive visits to emergency rooms, Thissen said.

The cuts also mean an increase in those with mental illnesses who will be without insurance, he said. That will also be more of a long-term cost to the state. At the least, the state must make sure those with mental health issues have insurance coverage for their medications, Thissen said.

"The dominant idea that the best way to succeed is for everybody to make it on their own, (needs to change)," Thissen said.

Minnesotans must consider the obligations they have to each other and then, talk more broadly about solutions and priorities, Thissen said.

He isn't advocating for a larger state government to solve the issues but rather to increase efficiencies, more cooperative initiatives at regional levels and borrowing good ideas from the private sector.

During his time in the Legislature Thissen has worked on health care issues including successfully helping to expand state health care coverage to about 20,000 more children. He's also worked on issues related to the aging baby boomers and alternative energy, particularly thermal heating.

If elected governor, he'd want to close the gap between the research on alternative energy and the commercial use of the research, Thissen said.

The state also needs to invest more money in alternative energy research, Thissen said.

Minnesota's next governor will likely face an "even tougher time in 2011" in terms of the budget, Thissen said.

Some of the cuts the Legislature was able to make in 2009 and 2010 won't be available in 2011, Thissen said.

"But this will still be a time to look at the broader picture," Thissen said.

