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Our Town

State legislators foresee worsening budget woes

By ELIO GUGLIOTTI
STAFF WRITER

Trouble, with more to come, was a persistent theme when area legislators came together for an annual legislative meeting hosted by the Central Connecticut Chambers of Commerce.

"We're in a world of trouble in the state of Connecticut," said state Rep. John Piscopo (R-Thomaston), during the Jan. 26 meeting.

The trouble Piscopo alluded to stems from the state's budget problems. The state is facing a deficit that is projected at about

\$500 million for the current fiscal year.

The deficit and the state's troubles are expected to grow in the coming years as revenue sources used to help fund the current budget dry up.

"We'll get through the next two years," said state Rep. Frank Nicastro (D-Bristol). "We've got to prepare for (2012, 2013, and 2014)."

Projections show the state's deficit growing into the billions in the years to come.

"It's a lousy hand to be dealt," said state Rep. Chris

Wright (D-Bristol). "But it's the hand that we have so we have to play it."

In his first term as a legislator, Wright told the crowd what has frustrated him in Hartford is the failure of both parties to come together and the prevalence of "gotcha" politics in the legislature.

State Sen. Thomas Colapietro (D-Bristol) said that right now there's a philosophical difference between the parties on where the cuts need to be made. Negotiations have been tough thus far, he said.

"We're doing the best

we can," said Colapietro. "We're negotiating."

Colapietro felt one of the major inefficiencies facing the state is too many people who are in high ranking positions in state government. "Too many people in high places," he said.

State Rep. William Hamzy said there has been no real acknowledgment of the problem facing the state. He felt the approach has been to just try and maintain the status quo and hope the economic situation facing the state will blow over.

Hamzy spoke of the importance of balancing the budget and making state government more efficient in order to bring Connecticut back to what it used to be.

"The state of Connecticut used to be a place where people could find economic opportunities," said Hamzy.

Over the last 19 years, Hamzy said only one net job has been created in the

state. As one example of how to make state government more efficient, the legislators supported the idea of consolidating state agencies that overlap services.

"To me there's little downside to combining agencies," said Hamzy.

Comments? Email egugliotti@BristolObserver.com

Central's biggest star

Chad Vassell took first place at 'Central's Got Talent' Saturday at the school auditorium. He entertained the crowd with his original piece, 'The Race Of Faith.'

TAMMI KNAPIK



Rep. Nicastro appointed to panel

State Rep. Frank Nicastro (D-Bristol) has been named to the Blue Ribbon Commission on Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies.

Nicastro was named to the commission by House Speaker Christopher Donovan (D-Meriden) and House Majority Leader Denise Merrill (D-Mansfield).

The commission, which began its work Jan. 19, is comprised of 45 Democratic members of the House of Representatives, along with representatives from municipalities, regional organizations, education, business, unions and non-profit organizations.

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