

CT POST EDITORIAL - HIGHLIGHTS CCPA MESSAGE

Budget process reaches new low

Connecticut Post Editorial

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At this point in the farce that is the state budget process, it's hard to know who deserves more blame.

Already late and facing the end of the fiscal year next week, the two dug-in sides in Hartford, Gov. M. Jodi Rell and Assembly Democrats, have now decided it's not important even to speak to each other. Bipartisan talks broke off earlier this week, and with Democrats introducing a sure-to-be-vetoed budget proposal, there is little hope for a settlement.

This is political brinksmanship, with neither side willing to give an inch. It's also selfish, embarrassing and devastating to entities that rely on state funding.

Democrats are including tax hikes in their plan, including a proposal to bring progressivity to the state income tax. Maybe the governor favors progressive taxes; no one knows, because she has categorically rejected any tax hikes. At the same time, she favors raising fares on mass transit.

Cities and towns depend on state funds for any number of vital purposes, none more so than poor cities like Bridgeport. **Nonprofit organizations and nursing homes by the dozens are in danger of failing to meet payrolls or closing altogether if they don't receive proper funding from the state. Without a budget, those worries grow exponentially.**

Even considering only crass political reasons, this is headed down a bad path. No one wants nursing home closures and the shuttering of nonprofits on his or her resume.

But, of course, it's more than just politics at stake. The governor and the Assembly are playing games with the state's most vulnerable populations, trying not to look weak while lives hang in the balance.

That's no overstatement. Community-based human service providers are teetering on the brink. If they close, people suffer.

And our "leaders" in Hartford can't even bring themselves to speak to each other. The state deserves much better.

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