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The Sound
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Smaller Can Be Better

By State Senator Ed Meyer

Our state budget deficit both continues and grows, requiring creative downsizing of state government. I am very challenged by the benefits that such downsizing could bring. I have made the following proposals to my colleagues in the General Assembly:

Virtually every state agency now has a large variety of administrative personnel—purchasing agent, legal counsel, accountants, information technician, public relations, etc. We would save enormous amounts of funds and make government administration more efficient if we consolidated these administrative services into one office serving all the state agencies.

Connecticut has separate education departments, one for elementary and secondary education and one for higher education. However, many states have recognized the continuity of education from kindergarten through college by having only one department. We can get that continuity and save substantial funds by taking that consolidation.

We have two outrageously expensive facilities in Connecticut operated by the state government,

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namely, Riverview Children's Hospital and Southbury Training School. The children's hospital now costs us more than \$900,000 per child, per year and its treatment program is deficient. The training school costs us almost \$400,000 per person, per year. In both cases, we could save millions of dollars and produce better results by the use of therapeutic homes.

As previously mentioned in this column, our prison system is broken because it throws together violent offenders with non-violent offenders who receive little rehabilitation service. The non-violent offender such as the drug user, probation violator, and the mentally ill would be better served at

far less cost by mandated rehabilitation instead of state prison, which costs an average of about \$45,000 per inmate, per year.

The best for last! We have a two-house state legislature comprised of 187 senators and representatives. A unicameral (one house) legislature would serve us much better and again save millions. The one house would be comprised of 35 legislators representing districts of about 100,000 each with at least the legislative leaders serving on a full-time, committed basis.

If you like any or all of these downsizing proposals, please let Senate President Pro Tempore Donald Williams and House Speaker Chris Donovan know. Without public support, these ideas will die on the vine of the next legislative session.

State Senator Ed Meyer (D) serves Branford, Durham, Guilford, Madison, and North Branford.