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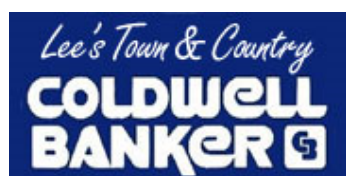
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SUN EDITORIAL: Look at the complicated when tackling Iowa's budget

We sure hope our state leaders take the "road less traveled" when the legislative session convenes this coming month and they face a \$1 billion revenue shortfall.

Certainly, cuts are needed. We laud those coming up with places to trim. In fact, we like a mix of ideas from Democrats to Republicans, from the governor to the legislators.

But the fact is, Iowa has a major problem here on both the debits and credits side of the state ledger. Now is an opportune time to look at every single area of revenue source, and every single expenditure. It's akin, we think, to a married couple sitting down and hashing out their entire annual budget to deal with the problem of less income (a layoff, perhaps) and spending challenges (increasing health care costs, for example).

The issue can begin with K-12 financing. Our own senator, Democrat Bob Dvorsky, has often said publicly that "it should all be looked at" when speaking to local school boards. How do we raise funds for school districts, and how do we dole it out? How can we improve it? Answering those questions shouldn't be put on hold. Address the issue now.

Similarly, the big issue of taxes should be examined closely. There are problems, after all. Just look at a recent story told by the Iowa Policy Project (its director is David Osterberg of Mount Vernon). Released by the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, the November report shows who pays taxes in all 50 states. The big result: Moderate- and low-income Iowans pay more of their income in state and local taxes than the rich do.

Look at that issue, state leaders. And look at how major corporations use tax loopholes to avoid contributing to Iowa's revenue stream ... and how small businesses pay more than their fair share.

No doubt, the state's legislative session that begins in January will be a challenging one. It's our hope that state leaders don't just say, "Okay, let's cut here." Instead, we urge them to get to work on the big picture. To use this time of adversity to right the ship for decades to come.

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