



Constitutional Budget Limits Would Put Minnesota's Future at Risk

We support preserving the ability of a simple majority of lawmakers to determine the overall size of the state budget and to manage available resources. Therefore, we oppose any amendment to Minnesota's Constitution that would require a supermajority vote to raise taxes or use reserve funds, or would restrict lawmakers from using available resources. Amendments such as these are short-sighted, damaging Minnesota's economic future by sharply limiting policymakers' flexibility to respond to changing demographics and emerging needs. They will also increase legislative gridlock and lead to more budget gimmicks as lawmakers find it harder to reach agreement.

These amendments artificially limit state revenue or expenditure growth, or create barriers for increasing taxes. Such actions prevent public investments in our infrastructure from keeping up with growth in the economy, and they restrict the state's ability to fund schools, safeguard the public health and maintain other critical services.

Experience from other states demonstrates that, whatever form these amendments take, they share similar problems. They:

- Increase gridlock by empowering a small number of legislators to block action on important priorities. Amendments such as these require a supermajority to override restrictions on budget actions. This allows a small number of legislators to stop legislation or negotiate concessions on other, unrelated issues.
- Increase the likelihood the Legislature will continue to resort to gimmicks or one-time fixes. Just as water forges a new path when it encounters an obstacle, so elected officials will try to find ways to meet the needs of their constituents. With constitutional limits in place, policymakers will use less transparent methods to enact budget decisions they feel are critical for Minnesota's future.
- Lead to short-sighted decisions that prevent investments in our future. Constitutional limits on budget decisions may not allow government investments to keep pace with growth in the economy, so the ability to build roads, fund schools, train our workforce, safeguard the public health and maintain other core services is diminished over time.
- Remove flexibility to respond to evolving public needs. Minnesotans want common-sense solutions to issues, but these constitutional amendments would circumvent meaningful public debate around what level of services that communities require from their government. Circumstances change over time, requiring policymakers to adapt the state's social and physical infrastructure to meet new expectations.

- Restrict the state's ability to respond to a crisis. These constitutional amendments would interfere with the ability of public officials to address unanticipated circumstances and emergencies. Although the amendment may allow overrides in extraordinary circumstances, the ability to respond appropriately to a natural disaster or a public health emergency often requires a long-term financial investment in preventive measures. This type of preparation for the future is among the first victims of budget cutting when resources fall short.