



Editorial: Cutting budgets a thankless task

Chico Enterprise-Record

Article Launched: 04/23/2008 12:00:00 AM PDT

Chico Unified School District trustee Rick Anderson made an impassioned plea to parents at last week's budget-slicing meeting.

He told unhappy parents if he and other trustees weren't on "this side" of the podium, they'd be on the other side, begging the board not to make cuts, just like the parents and teachers were doing that night.

But he stressed the bottom line was that these cuts, painful as they are, absolutely have to be made.

The board has a financial obligation to do it. And more cuts are coming in order to meet the district's foreseen \$7 million deficit in the 2008-2009 school year.

It's not enjoyable work. Nobody ran for the school board, we'd venture to say, so they could spend six months of the year in budget-cutting exercises. It's a volunteer position, and in the past few years there have been more headaches than rewards. The school board members are not enjoying the current chore, but it's a necessity. Either the local board makes the decision, or an agent of the state government will — likely with very little public or staff involvement.

The district is paying for its past refusal to make difficult choices and cut expenses. That makes this year's cuts even more unpalatable.

But it's not like CUSD is alone. The state is in a massive budget hole. Fertilizer rolls downhill. That means universities, community colleges, K-12 schools, counties and cities are all paying the price.

Just like Chico's trustees, state legislators are hearing the anger, seeing the tears and fielding the blame for the need to make drastic cuts. University students and employees were protesting at the Capitol on Monday. They'll be back next week. In fact, there's a rally nearly every day on the Capitol steps by one group or another.

While rallies may make the protesters feel their voice is heard, the state — just like the local school board — has to bite the bullet and slice into the heart of what makes this state great.

It's going to hurt. It won't be good for this community or this state, but it must be done.

The sooner we all realize that, stop protesting and seek constructive ways to adapt to the cuts, the better for all of us once we're past this dark time.

Perhaps state-impacted programs can look to the examples voiced by local parents last week who said they would step forward to make their programs work with diminished or no district money, relying on the strength and compassion of the community. That's the attitude we need throughout this community and state, because difficult times are ahead.