

House of Representatives State of Tennessee



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dear Friends:

In the wake of our nation's economic downturn we must realize that for us to build a successful tomorrow, we must begin with a proven financial foundation. This is the case in every economic scenario. If we continue to make bad business decisions, spend unwisely, and waste time and taxpayer dollars on matters that are not of state importance, we will fail in our duty as legislators.

There will always be individuals that plow through their earnings and waste what they have. But for those of us in government—servants of the people, stewards of taxpayer money—there should be no greater shame than to fail our fiscal obligation to the taxpayer.

Today, I issued the following press release in an effort to remain watchful of the taxpayer dollar.

Sincerely,

Donna

2010 UPDATE: The National Conference of State Legislators, an independent, non partisan organization has determined that each bill in Tennessee costs over \$4,700 each. This legislative session, Tennessee has filed over 2,000 congratulatory and memorializing resolutions.

PRESS RELEASE

Rep. Rowland fights for fiscal responsibility in Tennessee General Assembly

(April 30, 2009, NASHVILLE) – Representative Donna Rowland (R-Murfreesboro) announced today that the State House of Representatives has spent over \$ 300,000 on congratulatory and memorializing resolutions so far this year. Since the beginning of session this year, Rowland has chosen to cast a “present not voting” vote on most of the resolutions to show her disagreement with the volume of resolutions passing through the House of Representatives.

“As a steward of taxpayer money, it is important for us to recognize the tremendous amount of money we are spending on these resolutions,” said Rep. Rowland. “While I understand that sometimes we have outstanding individuals in our districts who deserve to be recognized, this has gotten out of control. These little things add up,” she added.

Representative Rowland said that preliminary results done in conjunction with the Fiscal Review Committee show the average cost is roughly \$800 and additional expenses remain to be factored into the

total cost. With almost 400 filed, the cost to taxpayers is just over \$300,000 for the year. And as Rep. Rowland points out, there will be more resolutions filed.

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“Before the federal government handed down the stimulus money, each department was told to prepare for reductions. The legislature was asked to eliminate \$1.1 million. Some of these resolutions, sign namings, and presentations on the floor could really have put a dent in that amount,” continued Rep. Rowland. “We hand these resolutions and road signs out like candy, but this money is not ours to give.”

Representative Rowland sits on the Fiscal Review Committee, which conducts a continuing review of sole state source contracts as well as other budget related items. She has always been an advocate for the taxpayers through her service on the committee, having identified over \$6 million in excess spending since 2005, and feels that by casting a vote of “present not voting” she is continuing that tradition.

“While I generally agree with the congratulatory text of resolutions, I do not agree that taxpayer dollars should be used for these items,” she said. “ ‘present not voting’ shows my dissatisfaction with the time and resources used.”

Rowland’s announcement comes on the heels of recent media reports from the Associated Press that the legislature has spent one out of every five minutes on the floor of the Tennessee House this year honoring and congratulating constituents or greeting visitors. In other words, out of about 37 hours spent in session on the House floor, nearly 8 hours were devoted to “personal orders,” in which House members formally present congratulatory and memorializing resolutions.

“This is also a great cost to the taxpayers, because for every day we are in Nashville, in session, we are given a per diem, and other administrative costs accrue as well,” pointed out Representative Rowland. “I was elected to the State House of Representatives to conduct state business as it relates to my constituents: actions that have a positive effect on our future, that correct injustices, etc. and that’s what I intend to do,” she concluded.