

Budget cuts in store?

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Area legislators have been keeping plenty busy over the last few weeks, and the name of the game is money.

State Reps. Tom Hawk and **Sydney Carlin** said they've been working on a House appropriations bill that could cut as much as \$335 million from the remainder of the state's 2009 budget. The majority of that, they said, would come from education funds.

Hawk said there are currently two forms of the bill circulating the House and Senate. The bill in the House, he said, would, cut about \$305 million from the budget. That translates to about a \$33 reduction in funds per student. The Senate bill would cut \$335 million, with a cut of about \$66 per student.

"It's not easy to cut other agencies, but it's even tougher to cut schools," Hawk said. "How do they have time to make the adjustments?"

Carlin, who has a seat on the House Appropriations Committee, said deciding what to cut has been difficult, and that legislators are trying to figure out what kind of help they will get from President Obama's stimulus plan.

"We don't want to cut any more than we have to," **Carlin** said. "Most of us haven't been in this situation before."

The Senate and House Appropriations committees meet jointly to discuss both bills and try to reach a compromise. Once both groups are satisfied, the bills will be sent back a vote. Both the House and Senate must pass the bill for it to be signed into law.

"We're trying to get this done as fast as possible so we can begin on the 2010 budget," **Carlin** said.

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