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DARLING: STATE SPENDING INCREASES HAVE NEARLY DOUBLED INFLATION

MADISON . . . Newly released statistics reveal that while the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased almost 75% over the past twenty years, state GPR spending increased at a rate of 140%, almost double the inflation rate, according to state Senator Alberta Darling, (R-River Hills), Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on Finance.

“These numbers are another sobering reminder that Wisconsin is not in this economic mess because we tax our citizens too much, we are in this deficit because we have spent too much for too long,” said Darling. “During the past twenty years, Wisconsin has passed budgets that have increased previous year spending at rates that dwarf the corresponding inflation increase rates.”

Darling acknowledges there are many reasons for the budget boom of the 80’s and 90’s, and that the responsibility does not lie at the feet of just one political party. Instead of assigning blame, Darling wants to reiterate the fact that spending cuts, not tax shifts or tax increases, are the best way to solve the \$3.2 billion deficit.

“What’s done is done,” said Darling. “We will resist partisan finger pointing and focus instead on getting our state out of this fiscal crisis while guaranteeing increased economic development opportunities.”

Statistics from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau show that between 1985-86 and the end of the next biennium 2004-05 (including expenditures currently contained in SB 44), state GPR spending will have shot up over \$6.8 billion or 140.3%. During the same time, CPI increases totaled 74.2%, roughly half the spending total.

“The committee and the Legislature will have to make very difficult decisions before we pass this budget,” said Darling. “Our goal is to send a budget back to the Governor in June that puts state spending back in line with the state taxpayer’s ability to pay.”

Darling and the Joint Committee on Finance spent Tuesday in Menasha, receiving public testimony on Governor Doyle’s 2003-05 budget from Fox Valley residents. Next week, the committee will hold budget hearings in Milwaukee and in River Falls.