



Responding to Legislators' Arguments Against Tax Increases

Occasionally, a legislator or someone from their office will cite a specific argument for opposing a tax increase. Here are some of the most common arguments – and responses that you can give to steer back to your own message. Remember, no matter their reasoning, always return to your message of why an income tax increase is the necessary and responsible approach:

- **Legislator: I'd support a tax increase, but my colleagues won't do so.**

Response: I'll ask my friends in his/her/their district(s) to talk with him/her/them. But you're my legislator, so I'm talking with you about the need to protect kids and families in our district. We're counting on your vote and support. This is an important opportunity to lead by example.

- **Legislator: We can't increase taxes before we reform government and strengthen ethics.**

Response: Yes, that work is very important – but we need to work on government reforms, accountability, and the budget at the same time; kids and families are hurting today and need your support. It isn't right to allow our budget problems to fall squarely on children and families, and to make them wait for our help – especially at a time they need it most. Your constituents are depending on you to do what's best. Waiting is not an option any longer.

- **Legislator: Budget cuts and belt-tightening are necessary. We need to cut our budget first.**

Response: But our multibillion-dollar budget shortfall is so great, cuts alone cannot fill it. We need a balanced solution – one that involves not only cuts, but raising new revenues. The income tax is the fairest way to do that. Again, kids and families cannot afford to have services cut while discussions about cuts are taking place – they depend on these services *every day*.

- **Legislator: This is the wrong time to raise taxes – during a recession.**

Response: It's certainly the wrong time to deeply cut or eliminate the services that kids and families need the most – such as preschool, child care, mental health and after-school programs. That's why a balanced solution calls for new revenues. An income tax increase is the fairest way to do that, tempered with fairness measures to protect struggling families from paying more – such as an increase in the Earned Income Tax Credit. And leading economists say that, in a recession, tax increases are better than deep budget cuts that would take direct services away from struggling families.

- **Legislator: I can't support a tax increase without knowing exactly how the money would be spent – and that it would be spent well.**

Response: I agree that there needs to be accountability and any new revenues must be spent on what's most important: protecting kids and families by eliminating the budget shortfall that threatens vital programs. But the best way to ensure new funding is spent the right way is to get involved in these budget discussions at the ground floor. We need you to do both things: spell-out the programs that need to be helped and push for the tax increase that's necessary to help them.