

# "Are you sure we have to accept what the State says about layoffs?"

*In a tight money situation everyone must pitch-in to help solve the problem. I've been told the most accepted way to deal with shortfalls is through some sort of reduced employment. This can include unpaid holidays and vacations, furloughs, shortened work weeks, job sharing or any of a number of other plans. This makes a lot of sense because, with unemployment already so high, we need to keep everybody working—no matter how little.*

*If you take a holiday, a furlough, a reduced work week or any other form of a layoff, you never get back what you gave up. You contribute to help overcome the shortfall, but you are never rewarded.*

*In addition, you must ask yourself how long you can live on less pay or no pay at all?*

*Then there is the question of the extra work load. Will you get additional compensation for providing the same services with fewer workers? And who will decide how the additional work will be allocated?*

*This is not a short-term crisis in need of short-term answers. Layoffs were the answer in Marion County because that was a short-term problem. What we have here is a change in the focus of government. People have overwhelmingly said that they want less government—that they won't pay for the number of services we now have.*

*The legislature has already mandated that the equivalent of 700 full-time positions be terminated. So we really must accept that layoffs are inevitable.*

*One of the problems with mandated layoffs is determining who will be layed-off? Will it be an even, across-the-board cut in all agencies? This would be hard to do at Mental Health institutions where they are already short of staff. And could you really shorten the work week to four days at OSCI and give guards Friday off?*

*If employees are going to be forced to accept some form of layoffs, they should be given equal input as to how and where these cutbacks will take place.*

*In many instances food stamps, unemployment benefits and other assistance is available for employees who are forced to accept a reduced work week. So in reality a reduced work week may not be as hard as you may think.*

*In most cases this just is not true. Assistance from the State in the form of unemployment insurance and food stamps is technically available for employees who have been totally layed-off, even if the layoff is only for a short period. However, if the employe volunteers for layoff or accepts a reduced work week, he or she may not be eligible.*

*Financially these programs are no substitute for a job. The amount of assistance you can receive each month is offset by any income for that month. So once your income exceeds the maximum benefit, assistance is cut off.*

*A good example is the four-person family. Their maximum monthly food stamp benefit is \$233, which they will receive only if they have no income. If one person receives a part of their former monthly income (perhaps because of a reduced work week) benefits decrease proportionately.*

*The same is true for unemployment insurance where the maximum weekly benefit is \$138. However, a portion of unemployment benefits are considered monthly income by AFS, thus reducing food stamp benefits.*

*Some forms of sharing by management and employees must be done if the State is to weather this crisis. This is an option that always should be considered, but is an option that must be approached in an atmosphere where management and labor are not taking adversarial positions.*

*If you agree to accept some form of reduced employment—if you agree you should bear this type of burden to help the State weather its financial shortfall—will you be rewarded for your effort?*

*If you are singled out to take some form of layoff without the guarantee of increased wages or some other reward, then you are being forced to accept a tax—that no other citizen is required to pay—in order to help the State through financially hard times.*

*This sharing is really nothing more than state management and some legislators holding state employees hostage to what they say is a short-term financial crisis.*

*But the real issue is not one of layoffs, it is one of less government. The people have expressed this desire at the ballot box. Now it is time for these citizens and their legislators to decide what services they want to cut and when and how to do it.*

