

Two press conferences held earlier this morning reacted to changes in the state budget debate. One was held by a group of lawmakers whose budget plan would freeze the property tax levy while protecting fire and police services. City of Milwaukee leaders who are concerned that the budget plan also includes a re-distribution of shared revenue away from Milwaukee held the other.

I was invited to speak at both events, but opted to give my comments at the home of Bob Bitters in the City of Milwaukee. Bob sent me his property tax bill last December with the county levy circled and the note, "Scott, I still believe in Santa!"

While the other areas of his property tax bill went up, his county tax levy did not. I was proud to present a county budget that froze the property tax levy. Now, he needs help avoiding more increase on the other areas of his property tax bill.

**With this in mind, my message to those working on the budget is simple: Freeze, Protect and Remove.**

First, to protect property taxpayers here in Milwaukee County, I support a freeze on the current property tax levy. This will insure that no local governments raise property tax bills just to cover the cuts in state aid proposed by Governor Doyle's budget.

Second, I lobbied the members of the Joint Finance Committee to protect fire and law enforcement services so they will not be cut as local governments look to tighten their belts. We need to protect our fire fighters and law enforcement officers.

Third, I asked the members of the Assembly and Senate last week to remove the new plan to re-distribute millions of dollars in Shared Revenue. While Milwaukee County government is not touched by this proposal, the loss of state aid for the City of Milwaukee is too great to suffer at one time.

If the members of the State Legislature and the Governor abide by these three simple principles, property taxpayers like Bob Bitters will be the real winners.