

Budget balancing actually involves a cut or two

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Not only was Pérez not a New Mexican, he was the choice of the unpopular President Antonio López de

Santa Anna, whose name will be forever tied to the Alamo in Texas. Gov. Pérez made things worse by snubbing Santa Fe's prominent families.

Santa Anna had centralized control, so outlying political subdivisions like New Mexico had less control locally. New Mexico's treasury was nearly empty; its only source of revenue was the tax on merchants arriving on the Santa Fe Trail.

One of Pérez's tasks was to raise taxes, a measure as unpopular 172 years ago as it is today. Pérez's political enemies began circulating rumors that the governor intended to levy taxes on sheep and pigs, woodcutters, shepherds who drove their flocks through Santa Fe, fandangos and even on sex between husbands and wives.

Pérez didn't take the unrest seriously until it erupted into an armed revolt. After a lopsided battle, Pérez and his few supporters retreated to Santa Fe, and Pérez fled south, where he was captured and beheaded.

The rebels used his head in a game of kickball. Then Manuel Armijo raised an army in Albuquerque, put down the rebellion, and re-established himself as governor.

Pérez never actually enacted a tax.

One reason I love history is learning that new conflicts and tactics aren't so new after all.

Fast forward to 2009: The American Federation of Teachers New Mexico, New Mexico

Voices for Children and a few lawmakers have called for a rollback on personal income tax cuts for the wealthiest New Mexicans (\$295,000 or more in annual income), capital gains tax cuts and "tax loopholes for big out-of-state corporations."

But fear not. The governor has said that in the up-coming special legislative session,

he won't repeal his personal income tax cuts.

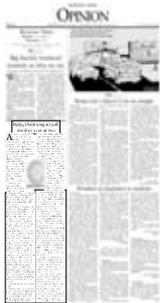
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The governor's plans, so far: Cut agency spending by 3 percent, don't touch public school spending but bolster it with \$91 million in stimulus funds, cash in short-term bonded capital projects, delay increases to retirement and health-care authority funds, cancel some capital projects, and dip into cash balances for \$40 million.

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Smith argues that education, which claims 60 percent of the budget, should take a hit like everyone else. That won't endear him to teachers' unions

and the education establishment, but it's brave.

Jennings proposes agency cuts of 5 percent. And he's using the word "sustainable." The state's expanding waistline, masked by an expanding economy, was never sustainable in the long run, he says. Some long-term restructuring is in order so the budget won't be the monster in the closet next year and the next and the next.

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Sherry Robinson

Commentary

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Sherry Robinson is a New Mexico News Services columnist. She can be reached at robinson@nmia.com.

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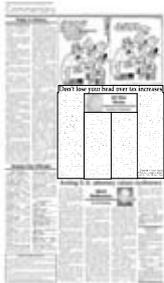
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