

Tonight, I will layout a clear picture of the state of our state. We will be realistic about the challenges we face while optimistic about our solutions.

First, let me be clear: we have an economic and fiscal crisis in this state that demands our immediate attention. The solutions we offer must be designed to address both job creation and our budget problems.

The budget and budget repair bills we will introduce in the coming weeks will be even more important than our Special Session legislation.

It is in those budgets where rhetoric meets reality, where we will show that we will make the tough decisions now to lay the foundation for future economic growth.

During the present downturn, Wisconsin's proud tradition of responsible budgeting gave way to repeated raids on segregated funds, excessive borrowing for operations and an addiction to one-time federal dollars. These are no longer options, and their use has only delayed and worsened the difficult decisions we must now make.

It is time to return to our founding principles again. We can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the tough decisions ahead.

Without swift corrective action, entitlement programs and legacy costs will eat up more and more of the operating budget. Failure to act only makes the problems worse in the future.