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## **For Third Year in a Row, Governor Balances Budget with Cuts to Higher Education and Other Important Programs**

**[Charleston, WV]** – Again this year, Governor Earl Ray Tomblin's proposed budget includes cuts to important programs like higher education and early childhood programs. Faced with a projected \$195 million budget gap, the governor proposes drawing from the state's Rainy Day Fund and implementing \$72 million in budget cuts, again using stop-gap measures to balance the budget.

A report released today by the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy, "The Governor's FY 2016 Budget: More Austerity, Less Prosperity," provides an in-depth analysis of what the governor's proposed budget would mean for the state.

"Instead of dealing with our state's revenue problem, this budget continues to kick the can down the road and shortchange investments in higher education and other programs that will help build a stronger economy," said Ted Boettner, Executive Director of the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy and one of the report's authors. "To put West Virginia on a more sustainable path and to ensure more kids have an opportunity to thrive, policymakers will need additional resources. This could include modernizing our personal income and sales tax, closing corporate tax loopholes, and adequately taxing our state's rich non-renewable natural resources."

Higher education funding will take another hit this year, putting investment in the state's colleges and universities at an eight-year low. In addition, the budget does little to address the state's ongoing crises like high levels of childhood poverty, obesity and diabetes, instead calling for another round of cuts to important programs.

The report provides many recommendations that would bring much-needed revenue to the state's budget to help it recover from years of tax cuts. These include increasing taxes on tobacco and alcohol, ending inefficient business tax credits and breeding subsidies, closing offshore tax haven loopholes and ensuring that the state always benefits from its rich mineral resources by strengthening the West Virginia Future Fund.

"The state budget is a reflection of the state's priorities," stated Sean O'Leary, Fiscal Policy Analyst with the West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy and coauthor of the report. "But without the necessary resources, West Virginia cannot fully commit to addressing the state's needs. By making the education and health of our workforce and children its top priority, West Virginia can use the state budget to ensure current and future prosperity."

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