



[Comments](#) | Recommended

Texas leaders ask agencies for ideas on spending cuts

12:00 AM CDT on Saturday, May 29, 2010

By **ROBERT T. GARRETT** / The Dallas Morning News
rtgarrett@dallasnews.com

AUSTIN – State leaders, bracing for a big budget deficit, asked agencies Friday for ideas to cut spending by up to 10 percent in the next two years.

They did the same thing two years ago, just as turbulence on Wall Street triggered the onset of a national [recession](#).

But Friday's instructions on how to request funds for the next budget cycle further dimmed [Republican](#) leaders' hopes to protect certain areas.

Prisons, adoption subsidies and an effort to diagnose toddlers' physical and mental disabilities were dropped from a list of programs permitted to ask for more money.

Gov. [Rick Perry](#), Lt. Gov. David Dewhurst and Speaker Joe Straus, R-[San Antonio](#), said they'd ordered the tighter limits, just as they last week ordered \$1.2 billion of immediate cuts, to be ready to close a two-year shortfall of as much as \$18 billion.

"This request ... builds on our ongoing call on state agencies to tighten their belts," Perry said. He said more trims will help keep taxes low and attract businesses.

Essential services

Dewhurst promised essential services won't be cut, and Straus said the directives will "help the Texas economy rebound."

But an advocate of more state spending on education and social services said the leaders are ignoring rapid population growth and the ravages of the recession.

"We never get to hear what it would really take to run state services for the next two years," said Eva DeLuna Castro of the Center for Public Policies.

Leaders praised

Former House budget panel chief Talmadge Heflin, however, praised the leaders and said he wished they wouldn't let any programs seek more money.

"It would just be interesting to see what might be able to be pulled from the areas that many people think you can't reduce at all," said Heflin, a Houston Republican now with the Texas Public Policy Foundation, which favors limited government.