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By IKE MGBATOGU

Contributing Writer

COLUMBUS – When Ohio Governor John Kasich gave his second State of the State speech not long ago in Steubenville, he was “pumped” up and used the moment to reflect back on “where we were and where we are now.”

In his remarks, delivered in his usual unorthodox speaking style, the tough-talking and reform minded governor bragged about his accomplishments.

“In six months, we eliminated an eight billion budget shortfall without a tax increase – eliminated it. We are balanced,” he said. He also noted that his policy against raising taxes “makes sense” because it helps attract companies to Ohio.

He then showered praises on the pioneering work of JobsOhio, the controversial economic development cabal he established soon after he became governor, claiming that it has created “43,500 new jobs,” including 14,400 manufacturing jobs in Ohio. That made Ohio 9th in the nation in job creation, he declared.

All of that, of course was Kasich’s story, and one he no doubt would stick to it.

But State Representative Tracy Maxwell Heard from Columbus has a vastly different account of Kasich’s performance as governor, which she said was abundantly evident in his $55.8 billion budget contained in House Bill 153 he gleefully signed into law.

In her view, it is an account of economic pain unleashed in a draconian budget with impact now catalogued in a website called www.cutshurtohio.com, said Heard.

“Our communities, schools, and local governments face an ever-growing financial crisis as a result of historically deep budget cuts that have placed an even greater responsibility on local property tax payers. Governor Kasich and Republican legislators cut $149 million from education and $133 million from our local government’s right here in Franklin County,” she said.

“This website shows just how bad our communities are hurting.”

But how bad are the communities really hurting?

Pretty bad, according to the website, that was launched last week to educate Ohioans about the devastating impact of the governor's cuts to funding for social services.

The website contains county by county analysis about the economic impact of Kasich's budgetary cuts. The analysis was based on the "$1.3 billion" Heard said was cut from state funding to schools, plus $460 million cut from the Local Governments Fund.

In a statement, Heard, who characterized Kasich's 3,262 page budget as containing "historically deep budget cuts," said that an additional $620 million was slashed from the local governments property tax replacement funding.

Yet, despite these cuts, Kasich disagreed with his "cynical" foes that see him and his high octane, ambitious, and impatient conservative juggernaut as being all about mowing programs.

"I have to tell you, you can't cut your way to prosperity. People think I'm this big budget cutter. I'd rather reform, reshape and make it better," he said.

He was right. Democratic lawmakers see him as a "big budget cutter." And that's why none of them voted for his budget after fiercely decrying it as a draconian agenda and a "job killer."

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