

# Better Choices for Connecticut

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## New Campaign Releases ‘Better Choices’ Plan

Campaign kicks off with plan to generate revenue to protect public services and quality of life for Connecticut residents

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A newly formed campaign in Connecticut announced its “Better Choices” budget plan to rebalance the state tax system and raise the revenue to protect vital public services – like education, healthcare for the most vulnerable, and public safety – from harsh cuts.

The new “Better Choices for Connecticut” campaign, which is formed by nonprofit providers, public service workers, and community and advocacy organizations, released a policy paper explaining a detailed plan to balance the state's budget primarily with targeted tax increases on the state's highest incomes. The group says that other proposals that depend heavily on service cuts will only deepen the recession in the short term and make the state less fiscally sound in the long-run.

"Connecticut has a revenue problem that needs to be addressed with a revenue solution," said Douglas Hall, Acting Managing Director at Connecticut Voices for Children, who explained the revenue plan. "Finding ways to increase revenues and avoid severe cuts that would harm the economy is the path that is both fiscally and economically responsible."

The largest share of new revenue in the “Better Choices” tax plan comes from raising income taxes on the state’s wealthiest residents making over \$200,000 per year and on closing corporate tax loopholes. The proposal also includes a penny increase in the sales tax, reduced subsidies to the entertainment industry and higher taxes on alcohol and tobacco. The plan also includes a new small business property tax credit and a state earned income tax credit. These reforms, along with funds expected from the federal economic stimulus plan and the state’s rainy day fund, will balance the state’s two-year budget without cutting crucial public services.

A new poll recently released by the State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) indicates broad support for this idea: a strong majority of 54% support increasing taxes on the wealthy and large corporations as opposed to large cuts to public services (19%) and laying off public employees (15%) as a solution to the budget crisis. Further, the poll indicates 78% support (47% strong) for raising taxes on those making over \$200,000 year and 83% support (57% strong) for closing corporate tax loopholes.

“During a deep recession, demand for public services dramatically escalates. Slashing vital state services would hurt our most vulnerable people. Connecticut is the wealthiest state in the nation, but it is also among the most unequal. We have the capacity to protect and invest in our people and our communities,” said Maggie Adair, Policy Director at Connecticut Association for Human Services

"People trust the government to take care of them when times get tough – it's the bridge to getting back on their feet. We're seeing so many more people who never thought they'd need food stamps and now they do – middle-class families looking for short-term assistance until they become self-sufficient again. We have to make sure that they have the tools to get back up on their feet," said Suzette Strickland, SNAP/Food Stamp Outreach and Policy worker at End Hunger Connecticut!.

Governor Rell, who has announced plans to address the state about her budget on TV this evening, has promised that her upcoming biennial budget will include deep cuts affecting every agency of the Connecticut government. Better Choices For Connecticut believes that reliance on spending cuts is both unwise and unnecessary. Slashing public services in the midst of this recession places the Connecticut economy in grave danger. With smarter choices, Connecticut has the capacity to protect our schools, our transit, our infrastructure, our social services, and our public safety agencies.

**Better Choices for Connecticut** *is a community coalition working to help Connecticut make better choices on ways to improve the state's imbalanced revenue system so that it advances opportunity for shared prosperity for all Connecticut residents; preserves services for children, families and the elderly; creates and sustains good jobs; and reinvests in the middle class and our communities.*

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