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LR 3

There is a natural tension in this Legislature between the ongoing funding of government services, the things that we've always done and are required to do and aren't as interesting, oftentimes, and some of the new ideas, and we all need to have a discussion about it and be able to understand what those choices mean. LR 3 is a target, not a lid. A lid is developed to respond to the future; to control behavior in the future in unpredictable times, in unpredictable situations. A target is us saying where we're going for the current period of time. A lid must be flexible enough to respond to circumstances that we don't know yet and, by doing that, it often sets the target for spending too high. A target is really critical and has really been critical because of our strong economy. We have had a target in the past, usually by virtue of not having any money to spend, and so our target becomes what's available. But it...during times as we've had in at least the last five years, when the economy is healthy and revenues are increasing, there...it's very difficult to have a target, and it's very difficult because every single new idea that comes forward, every single agency that comes in wants to expand, has strong ideas, good ideas, and how do you say "no" if there is no strategic control? LR 3 is a very low target. It's actually lower than the current Appropriations Committee recommendation that's contained in the goldenrod brochure that I'm sure all of you have memorized. But we are coming off a biennium where our spending increased by 5 percent and 12.6 percent, an average of 9 percent over that biennium. That kind of spending growth really makes us question sustainability over a period of time, and so it does make some sense to look at a low figure, a 3 percent figure, as a way to balance out. Spending growth below growth in personal income gives us some comfort that we're going to be able to sustain spending over time, and sustainability of spending should be the most important consideration that we have. We spend a lot of time being concerned about sustainability of tax cuts, but much less time concerning ourselves about sustainability of spending and, yet, that would seem to be the most important thing. Because once we get into spending, then we have some obligation to continue it, and so we should be very careful about initiating new spending. LR 3 allows better communication with the public about what our goals are, and that kind of communication I believe is critical. We have had priorities in this body and priorities that...that I