



## Keller @ Large: Do Local Politicians Have Their Priorities In Order?

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Reporting [Jon Keller](#)

BOSTON (CBS) – You know how it is with your own personal budget – in the end, it’s a statement of your priorities.

When the time comes to cut, you have to make a statement about what really matters to you, and that’s when the going gets interesting.

For the politicians who sign off on it, the state budget is also about priorities, an annual statement of their values and their fortitude.

Those decisions aren’t easy.

Some of their choices are restricted by law and financial obligations; some are forced on them by the mistakes of the past; others are dictated by the reality of political life, that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and some petitioners are denied at your political peril.

But then sometimes, you see choices being made that seem just plain absurd.

Like Governor Patrick’s decision to use one of his rare vetoes on \$10 million that was set aside for salary increases for people who do some of the dirtiest, most desperately-needed jobs for some of state government’s lowest wages.

I’m talking about the more than 31,000 direct care human service workers making \$40-grand a year or less who were in line for pay hikes of less than two-percent, a bit more than \$600 a year.

Keep in mind what these people do: caring for the most neglected kids in our culture, including those at risk for abuse; helping the infirm and disabled with everything from getting around to changing adult diapers; working in group homes, shelters, providing care for the neediest on the 363 days a year, excluding Thanksgiving and Christmas, when most of the pols and celebrity volunteers aren't around.

A spokeswoman for the administration told me yesterday the governor is "committed to addressing wage issues" and plans to boost the workers' salaries next year, cold comfort for these struggling folks who haven't had a pay boost in five years.

The legislators who approved the raises can now choose to override the governor's veto. They all love to talk about their noble priorities.

This seems like a good chance to put up, or shut up.

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