State Rep. Alicia Reece spoke about why she is all for it.

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COLUMBUS – When in 2011 Democratic lawmakers lost the battle over what they described as Governor John Kasich's draconian budget cuts to education and other social goods, it wasn't for lack of effort.

Rather, it was for these three reasons.

First, it was their minority status in the Ohio legislature. Second, it was the utter lack of bipartisanship in a government where Kasich was more interested in ‘running over’ folks who disagreed with him than holding policy parleys to find common ground. And third, and probably most importantly, there were way too many disagreeable policies coming out of the Kasich administration at a time of fiercely acrimonious political milieu.

But together, those reasons have offered Democrats the moxie to take their case back to Ohioans and explain to them how the policies of the Republican leadership are hurting them and the need for sustaining an aggressive pushback posture to protect communities across the state.

And since the adoption of that budget, Democrats have been doing just that, arguing that Kasich’s budget mowed about “$1.1 billion” in funding to Ohio communities. Seemingly, the effects of that budget are starting to painfully play out.

For example, Cleveland and Cincinnati school districts are beginning to feel the pain. Just recently, both districts announced significant teacher layoffs due to these cuts. In the case of Cleveland, a total of 508 teachers could lose their jobs this year due to $59 million loss in education money. For Cincinnati, 237 teachers could be sent home this year having lost $43 million in education funding.

For these reasons, Democrats, who accuse Kasich of being a hostile mugwump, are vowing a rabid fight to protect Ohio families, schools, and middle-class from the ‘slash and slash some more’ minded Republican leadership.

“While Statehouse Republicans continue their overreaching partisan priorities, House Democrats are committed to common-sense solutions that put working and middle class families first,” said House Minority Leader Armond Budish.

Democrats, said Budish, will continue to “place a renewed focus this year on creating jobs, rebuilding Ohio communities, protecting the rights of Ohioans and improving education and workforce training opportunities.”

Last week, that “renewed focus” resulted in a solution after House Democratic lawmakers announced the creation of ‘The Kids & Communities First Fund’ to help school districts reeling from deep budget cuts to education.

According Democratic lawmakers, funding deficit for school districts in 2014 across the state will surpass “$1.79 billion,” a lugubriously looming tinderbox they worry will hurt schools and communities.

Budish explained why his caucus established the fund.

“The Kids and Communities First Fund will help keep teachers in the classroom, and cops and firefighters on the streets in communities all across Ohio,” said Budish, who went on to say, “this fund will help curb the growing need for local tax levies due to state budget cuts and provide relief for local property taxpayers.”

Being proposed as an amendment to Kasich’s Mid-Biennium Review in House Bill 487, Democrats are hoping to use ‘The Kids and Communities First Fund’ to generate about $400 million for school districts and communities hurting from Kasich’s massive cuts to education.

And where exactly would the $400 million come from?

Democrats are hoping to raise the money from a menagerie of sources, including this year’s surplus revenue which according to them currently stands at $265 million. But there are other sources as well, including the Budget Stabilization Fund, which will supply $120 million of the target $400 million, and the governor’s severance tax increase, which will produce $15 million.

Then there’s also the goal of raising $500 million more to enhance the fund after 2013, which is expected to also come from the same severance tax increase.

State Rep. Alicia Reece spoke about why she is all for it.

“Stories of communities cutting or privatizing critical safety services and in some cases even considering dissolving all together are pouring in from across the state,” said Reece. “If we don’t protect our communities, we undercut our economic recovery and hurt working and middle class families.”

State Representative John Carney took the same view.

“Failing to address last year’s deep budget cuts will hurt our schools and make Ohio less economically competitive,” said Carney, who decried the possible impact of these cuts to local taxes. “Doing nothing will keep forcing local taxes to go up and put more pressure on middle class Ohioans.”

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