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3 SPEAKERS

House Speaker Matt Hall

Reporter

reporter

START OF TRANSCRIPT**[00:12:39] House Speaker Matt Hall**

Oh, hello, members of the media, esteemed members of the media. Very excited. We have Dani here today from MLive highly respected. MLive which does you guys do a good job. Kalamazoo Gazette Have you ever been in the Kalamazoo Gazette? Do they print you in there? That's pretty cool. Yeah, I, uh, I get on the front page a lot. You know, you don't want to be on the front page of The Detroit News because you probably committed a crime. But on MLive, you can still get there without committing a crime or a major ethics violation. So I get on there a lot. So it's good. Um, yeah, I, uh, that's funny, although, Beth, you got me on there once For, for purposes of, uh, normal news. So that was yeah, I've been on the Detroit news for good reasons before. All right. Well, um, I'm proud that my brilliant negotiating has brought a framework agreement. I'm very happy about that. Uh, we all know that, uh, you know, Jen Flood, the governor's budget director, was not authorized to discuss targets while the governor was out of town. Um, you know, we were willing to go talk to Wendy Brinks and make a deal with Winnie Brinks without the governor's team. And then I was going to brief the governor on it when she got back. Uh, I'm happy to report that shortly after those comments, um, and we saw the Jen flood become empowered, uh, and all of a sudden she had the ability to negotiate the budget.

[00:14:35] House Speaker Matt Hall

So I was really happy about that. Um, I tried to update the press on that Thursday night, so I posted a little update for you on that. Um, and we've continued those conversations on Juneteenth, uh, over the weekend. Um, and then late last night, we got an agreement on framework. Uh, so I'm really happy about that. Um, in that framework agreement, uh, we're not going to see any tax increases. We won't see any raid of the rainy day fund. Uh, so those, those will not happen. Uh, which were major, uh, lines in the sand that I drew, as you know. Um, and we will see a smaller budget than last year. So those are very good things. Uh, we have this framework signed by myself and Winnie Brinks and Governor Whitmer. So I'm really happy about that. Um, now, you know, I can't talk about all of the details just because when you're doing these negotiations, there are trusts that you have to build. And some of that is the confidentiality that the Democrats push for. Um, but I do think that, um, without violating the agreement, I can say those things. Um, and I'm really happy about that. I'm hopeful that we can get a deal, uh, hopefully today on targets. I think that would be a really good thing if we could get a deal on targets. So what you have to do is you get the framework. Those are the big picture things like I talked about.

[00:16:14] House Speaker Matt Hall

Are you going to raise taxes? Are you going to take money from the rainy day fund? What is the totals going to be? Um, and then you get everyone to sign on that. And then you have to then take those numbers and you have to assign them to each department. So what targets is, is how much money are we going to spend on state police? How much money are we going to spend on Mdot? How much money are we going to spend on health and human services? How much money are we going to spend on the Department of Education and on and on. So now what we're working on is figuring out what those numbers are. So how much are we going to spend on each department that's called a target. And then we're hopefully we get a deal on that today. I don't see why we can't get a deal on that today. Um, and then, uh, then we'll get the subcommittees to work, uh, working on, uh, working out the details of each individual, uh, subcommittee budget. So, um, I'm really happy about that. Uh, and I'm hopeful that we'll we'll get a deal. And, you know, there's still a chance that we can get this thing at least through the House and Senate and to the governor by July 1st. Um, you know, last year, I'll just tell you this, last year the subcommittee's negotiated. I mean, we did the entire budget in 48 hours last year.

[00:17:46] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, there was like nine, nine months and 28 days of, of higher level disagreements on the framework. And then there was 48 hours of doing the budget. Okay. So we're well more than 48 hours from the July 1st deadline. So if we can get an agreement on targets, we're actually giving our subcommittee chairs a lot more time to work out their differences. Um, and I would say, uh, this is going to be challenging for some people, uh, because this is a budget where you're going to have to make cuts. I mean, if it's smaller than last year, you've got to make cuts. So we made some cuts last year, you know, that we cut \$800 million of waste, fraud and abuse from the budget last year. We made it smaller than the year before. Uh, we're going to have to do that again for two reasons. Number one, no tax on tips, overtime and Social Security. Uh, because we're giving you back more of your money, the taxpayers. That means we have a little less revenue this year. Secondly, because we cut \$800 million of waste, fraud and abuse from departments, and we permanently dedicated that to roads. That money is not available for departments to spend. Um, and therefore, you have to figure out are you going to raise taxes? Are you going to take money from the rainy day fund, or are you just going to make cuts? And, and I think we now know that we're just going to make cuts.

[00:19:32] House Speaker Matt Hall

And so that'll be hard for the subcommittee chairs. But I do know that the House Republicans, we've been preparing for this the whole time. I mean, last year we put out a budget that cut \$5 billion of waste, fraud and abuse. This year, we showed how we can cut \$2 billion of waste, fraud and abuse just by not over budgeting. I mean, we saw in this budget they over budgeted 50% of the line items, um, by over \$2 billion of money that they're not even spending. They're just putting it in line items to pad line items. And many of that, hundreds of millions of dollars of that are the ghost employees. And we saw over 3300 ghost employees in this year's budget, which is costing the taxpayers \$500 million a year that we can identify so far. You get rid of the ghost employees, you cut wasteful grant programs, you clip these wasteful IT programs a little bit, and you work on some of the economic development giveaways for the big corporations. And you can easily cut from this budget. So I'm hopeful that's where those discussions go, really with the House budget as a roadmap for those cuts, where we showed how you can cut \$2 billion from this budget just by getting rid of the over budgeting the waste, fraud and abuse. Um, so once we get the targets settled, I'm hopeful that we'll begin those negotiations, um, you know, very soon and the subcommittees will have much more time than they had last year.

[00:21:12] House Speaker Matt Hall

And then ultimately, the things that we can't resolve in the subcommittees, they get elevated to me. Governor Whitmer and Winnie Brinks, and we'll work through those things just like we did last year. So that's a positive development. I wanted to share with you, my friends. The esteemed members of the press corps. Oh, Mr. Eggert, good. You took my recommendation. You're sitting over there, my man. He does a great job, doesn't he? He's a really good reporter. And I appreciate you fairly covering the hospital review board. Um, the hospital cost review board. I thought you did a really good job with that. And, um, there was a great article in Crain's. Hopefully you guys read it on the hospital cost review board. And as you know, Mr. Eggert, um, this hospital cost review board is going to dramatically lower prices. It's going to require that if the hospitals want to continue to be nonprofits, that they'll lower their costs by 10%. It will prevent them from entering into mergers and raising prices. The only way they can do mergers is if they lower their costs. Um, now we were sold on mergers as a way to lower costs. And then the costs go keep going up. So that's not working. So the hospital cost review board will require them if they're going to do a merger they have to lower their costs.

[00:22:41] House Speaker Matt Hall

It's going to stop 1 or 2 big hospital systems from buying up very significant percentages of the market. Um, you know, if one hospital controls 30, 40, 50% of the market, they can just raise the prices, right? And so the Hospital Costs review board is going to stop that. We're going to cap the cost increases by the rate of inflation. And they're going to have to open up their books because we give them billions and billions of dollars a year, but yet their prices go up. I mean, we saw one of them that was trying to raise their prices 40% this year and that got stopped. So but they're raising their prices well above the rate of inflation. They're paying their executives millions of dollars and they're, uh, and they're building new wings and they're buying up other hospitals and then they're raising their prices even more. The hospital costs review board will stop that. Um, and so we're, we're looking forward to that moving through the house very quickly. I think there'll be a hearing on it very soon. Uh, so excited about that. Um, now we're working on, uh, but big bipartisan deal that I'm working on is to come up with a plan on medical debt relief for the people of Michigan. Uh, you'll see some bills moving this week through the house. Um, sponsored by. Rep. Rep. Frisbee and rep. Schmaltz that are really going to make a big difference on relieving medical debt for people.

[00:24:21] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, and those will join bills that previously moved, I believe from rep Regas and rep. Um, we all know that Rep Husky is a highly respected Democrat. Um, I watched her on off the record. I thought she did a very good job. I thought that, um, you know, these, these media people were trying to get her to criticize the governor, but she didn't take the bait. I thought she showed really heartfelt concern for all of these victims, um, at this, uh, women's prison. Um, and I thought that, you know, she spoke to the need to, um, to really see the governor's administration do more here. Um, but really coming from a place of caring and, uh, constructive criticism as opposed to, you know, trashing anybody. Um, it's a big government and we can't let anything slip through the cracks. So I appreciate what Rep Pro is bringing to that conversation. Um, she really would have been a much better leader for the House Democrats than their failed divisive leader, Randy Perry, who's not anywhere close to these budget conversations. Um, that's why I had to appoint a new leader for them. And Joe Tate, former speaker, uh, who's, who's doing a great job with us, working together to come to a resolution on the budget that will be a bipartisan resolution. Um, but in the case of Rep Paul, I think had she been their leader, uh, the Democrats would, would have a lot more say in what was going on in the House because she's clearly somebody that's demonstrated that she wants to solve problems and work across the aisle.

[00:26:09] House Speaker Matt Hall

Something we can't say about their Ranji Puri, who basically just shoots off National Democrat talking points and tries to obstruct everything. And by the way, he's not obstructed one bill. He's been a failure in that every single bill we've wanted to get through the House has gotten through the House, including last week when we moved our bill to stop all of these harmful dyes, like the red dyes, to put an end to that. And we saw a brave Democrat, Peter Herzberg, cross the aisle and help us get that done. He did a great job on that. Um, and you see the way that Jay De Boyer and Rep Polotsky have been working so well on the oversight committee, working to solve problems in a bipartisan manner. Uh, when the Whitmer administration is failing to address things like this women's correctional facility. So I thought she did a great job there. Uh, we're working with her, um, along with rep Frisbee and Shmaltz to do the medical debt relief. We've got to stop these predatory practices from the hospitals where you have a medical emergency, and you get home from the hospital, and the next thing you know, the hospitals hire a debt collector, and this guy is garnishing your wages without a court order, foreclosing on your house, filing a lien and foreclosing on your house, ruining your credit.

[00:27:40] House Speaker Matt Hall

Uh, we got to put an end to that. And we're going to do that with this bipartisan deal that I'm working on, and I'm hopeful we'll have a deal very soon on this. Maybe as soon as this week, uh, to really give people peace of mind that if they have an emergency and it causes medical debt, um, that they're not going to be subject subjected to these predatory practices from the debt collectors that hospitals put on them. So very hopeful. We'll get that through the House this week, and maybe we'll get a deal this week. And, uh, you'll see us moving on that maybe next week, you know, with the five day rule. So happy about that. Um, we're also working this week to, uh, uh, issue that rep brought to me when we were up in his district in Marquette a couple weeks ago. Um, this housing is, the costs are going up. And one of the reasons for this is these big private equity firms and these big corporations are buying up all these homes. And I was with the HUD secretary last week, Scott Turner, and we talked about it with him and Tom Barrett. Uh, that we really need to stop this. Uh, these single family homes should not be owned by big corporations. They're supposed to be for families and we're going to put an end to that with legislation this week, which will be big for Marquette and big for the state.

[00:29:10] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, you know, the only it isn't just subsidies to lower housing costs, right? Creating more supply is another way regulatory reform, uh, stopping these predatory local governments from, uh, from zoning out of houses that people can actually afford. Uh, there's a lot of ways we can bring down the cost. Um, you know that housing costs, it's like I heard an update when we were with Secretary Turner last week. It's actually \$130,000 now. Is the average cost of regulations on a new home. Um, that's gone up, by the way, over the last couple of years. It used to be 100,000. Now the latest statistics are \$130,000 just in regulations. So if we can reduce those regulations, we can lower the costs. If we get rid of these hedge funds and private equity firms and big corporations from buying up single family homes, we can increase the supply as well. And when we do our massive property tax cuts, we're also going to make housing more affordable because, uh, you buy a house, uh, the property tax bill is going to be at least \$900 less a year every year. Uh, that's going to be a big thing. Um, we're also working this week on a personal priority of mine. Um, that was introduced by Rep Steve Frisbee and Rep Riley linting to end this surveillance pricing that you're seeing all over the place, um, where these companies are spying on you and manipulating prices.

[00:30:53] House Speaker Matt Hall

They're using AI and they're tracking you and then they see, okay, this person is going to want this good or service. I'm going to jack up the price for him or her where everybody else would pay less for it. That's surveillance pricing. We're going to stop it there. Using browsing history, location data, demographics, web traffic, and AI to predict how much you would pay. That's not fair. That's gouging. It's really a modern day advanced gouging. We're going to stop it. We're not going to do that anymore. We're going to ban it in Michigan. Appreciate the leadership of Riley Lansing and Steve Frisbee to put an end to that. And I'm getting you know, it's interesting. You know, you talk to all these people in these companies and they say, we're not doing that. And I will tell you, I'm getting companies and industries calling my office, begging me to exempt them from this, saying, please, please exempt us from us. We're not doing it, but exempt our company, carve out our company, carve out our industry. Well, you know what that means. They're doing it right. Why do they need a carve out if they're not doing it? We're not going to give carve outs like that. We're going to stop these companies from doing these predatory practices, using AI to gouge you and make you pay more just because you're in a situation where and you see through that and what. But and you see through that and what but I mean, I want to be clear, last week, Jen Flood was not authorized to talk about targets and the governor was out of the country.

[00:32:36] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, that has nothing to do with property tax or anything else. If you can't talk about the budget targets and you can't talk about the framework, then we can't negotiate a budget. It went on like that all week. Uh, fortunately, once I said, look, that's fine. I'm just going to go talk to Winnie Brinks and do a deal with Winnie Brinks. And I started moving down that road. Then all of a sudden, Jenn Flood and the governor's team were authorized to work on the budget. And then we made a lot of progress. It was a lot of work. First day, Juneteenth over the weekend, Father's Day, all of that doing this, and we got that framework in place. So, um, and I think I probably gave it that kick start it needed. And I was fully ready to do a deal with just Winnie Brinks and brief the governor on it when it was done. But fortunately, um, the governor's team moved, they started negotiating the budget. And all three of us have come to an agreement on the framework. So I think it's back on track where we can do it with the governor. And that's my preference, is to do the deal with the governor and with leader Brinks. That's easier, but everyone needs to be authorized to talk about the budget.

[00:33:49] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, and then there should be another room that's meeting to talk about all the policy. Right. And that doesn't have to be instead of the budget, you can do both. And so my hope is that that that will come to a deal that has big property tax relief for the people of Michigan. Um, and then we can do a deal on some of the other priorities that other people have. You know, there's different bills out there that the governor wants that the Senate wants. Um, I'm trying to remove the medical debt relief from that room and just say, hey, let's do a deal on medical debt relief as a show of good faith. Right. I mean, the House has been leading on this. You've seen that the Democrats want to do it so we can do a deal on this as a sign of good faith, and then we can work. And hopefully we have a deal that has property tax relief. It has some of the Democrats priorities on policy. Um, and then that happens alongside the budget. And, you know, a lot of these have fiscal impacts. Um, there are a lot of bills that have fiscal impacts. You know, uh, I've seen some of them, um, on both sides. And so you've got to work out the policy in one room and then say, okay, can we fit it in the budget? So it'd be better to do it during the budget.

[00:35:10] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, and I'm hopeful we will, but, you know, I think it's kind of mutually assured destruction here, right? I mean, if they aren't going to do property tax cuts, then we won't do their policy. Um, and we'll have 22 public acts for the year. Now we do have, uh, what are there six medical debt bills. So we could do those. Six and that would put us up to 28. And I will remind you, at any time, the Senate could just pass the bills that are sitting in their chamber. I was watching, uh, Alvin, hopefully you guys all watched to the point on Sundays every week, And I was watching that on wood TV. And, um, and when he brings his on there from Mackinaw and she's saying there are so many bills sitting in the house and, uh, you know, I'm very, I think Rick is a great reporter. If I was in Rick's chair, I would have said, well, what about the 100 more on top of that that are sitting in the Senate because there's a number of bills sitting in the House plus 100 that we passed that are sitting in the Senate. They could move those at any time. So we don't have to have 22 or 28 public acts. I guess the budget would be two more, so 30 public acts. We don't have to have 30 public acts. We could make a deal. Um, and then we could get back into the 70s range like we were last year, or we don't have to make a deal at all.

[00:36:37] House Speaker Matt Hall

And they can just pass the, you know, hundreds and hundreds of bills that are sitting in the Senate and then they can get a lot of those things done, too. So they could do it either way. If it were up to me though, we would just make a deal. We would get property tax cuts and then Democrats would get some of their priorities done too. You know, I really hate to see us waste Gretchen Whitmer's final six years in office. And when he brings his final six years in office, everyone knows I'll be speaker for four more years so I can continue to pursue my legislative goals. But, I mean, we've got an opportunity here to lower property taxes by \$900 a year to force the utilities to lower their rates by \$1 billion, which the average person would save \$250 a year on their energy bill. And now, with the Hospital Cost Review Board, you could see how your health care costs go way down. Um, we could make health care more affordable as well. Uh, so I hope we get a deal that includes the hospital cost review board and property tax and lowering your energy bills, and we'll keep working that. But that's never been the way it was reported by some people that that was holding up the budget. These are parallel things, and I think we'll get a deal that involves it all honestly. Yeah. Go ahead Simon.

[00:38:00] Reporter

Yeah. You said there's six you know, medical debt bills out there. What do you see as the main obstacles to a deal on that? What are the things that you might think?

[00:38:11] House Speaker Matt Hall

I would say the main obstacle is does Sarah Anthony get four bills or does Sarah Anthony get one bill. You know, it's always about how many bills Sarah Anthony gets. Why do you need four bills in one package? You know what I mean. And if I were the Democrats, I'd be looking at that. I'd say, why? Why are you doing all four of these bills? Because, you know, what I was taught is, you know, if you have four bills, you could get three of your colleagues support to help if you include them in the package. Right? So think about that. She could have given one to Kevin Hertel. She could have given one to Darren Cammalleri, who I endorsed as a leader of the Senate Democrats. And he owes me. Um, you know, if she would have given one to Darren Cammalleri, I probably would be like, hey, let's do that. Because Darren and I, we get along really well. I mean, I endorsed him when none of the Senate Democrats would endorse him, and I picked him to be their leader. And then their whole caucus followed behind me and did it. Um, you know, you've got, uh, you know, that, uh, Senator Vono, he's highly respected, so they could have spread it out and then we could do it. But, um, you know, Sarah Anthony's insisting on for public acts out of the six. That's what's holding it up. So we're going to move these through the house and hopefully we get a bipartisan deal, um, where, you know, we can spread the love a little bit. And, uh, you'd see, you know, there's a lot of people that have been working on this.

[00:39:42] House Speaker Matt Hall

I mean, for example, you know, Sarah Anthony got her way. Rep Pohutsky wouldn't get a public act. Um, you know, I think rep would be, you know, deserves a look. I think, uh, you know, obviously Angela Regas has worked very hard on this. Um, I also see that, uh, Steve Frisbie has done a lot on this and Kathy Schmaltz and Carl Bonac. And then the other thing here is that any deal on medical debt must include price transparency. That's really important and not the type of price transparency where they bury it on their website, you know, and you can't find it. You have to search for hours and hours and you can't find the prices. Uh, it's got to be easy to find and clear price transparency and, and the consequences, uh, if you don't, if you don't list your prices, then you can't collect medical data at all. And so it makes sense to group those together. I think that's what the intent of Senator Lindsey was. You see Sarah Anthony kind of break that up and try to tie price transparency to. 340 B that never made any sense. Um, you saw the bills that we passed through the house many months ago. By the way, we passed medical debt relief many months ago and we tied it to the price transparency. So we'll have to see that in the deal. And then I think it's okay for Sarah Anthony to have 1 or 2 public acts she doesn't need for honestly. And I think even the media, which hates me and likes Sarah Anthony, would agree with me on that for public acts. Come on, that's pretty unreasonable. Yeah. Go ahead. Beth.

[00:41:26] Reporter

Uh, what were your thoughts on, uh, Brad Williams saying in the column that you were on an island in addition.

[00:41:37] House Speaker Matt Hall

Oh, I mean, obviously I'm not. I'm not on an island. Um, you know, I'm, I mean, I think what we're doing and by the way, um, I think Chad Livengood was trying to do a hit piece on me. Um, but most people saw it as very positive toward me. Um, and one thing that he put in there that was fair because, you know, I try to see the good in these things. Uh, he said, I'm the closest speaker in Michigan's history to a president. And I thought that was pretty interesting analysis by Chad. He would know. Um, and I think it's, you know, we're going to get a great deal on this bridge. I have a lot of confidence in Howard Lutnick and Pete Hoekstra to lead those negotiations. Um, and I thought Mike Rogers brought some interesting concerns recently when Mike Rogers talked about the need to stop these Chinese cars That are coming. That would be coming across this bridge. Um, you know, we see some of these practices in these provinces where they're banning American products from their shelves, like we see, um, in Ontario with their wacky Premier Ford. Um, it's just a total wacko. Um, and they're banning liquor from the shelves. We see practices with the dairy farmers that are not good. You know, some of those things will get worked out.

[00:43:04] House Speaker Matt Hall

But on the bridge, you know, we need a better deal. I mean, and I stand by that. Um, the Blue Water bridge is a great example. That's a partnership between the state of Michigan and Canada. And, and in that one, we have property rights, real property rights, not nominal property rights where you can actually transfer your interest, you can make improvements, you can have a say on a lease. Those are those are equal property rights. And then, you know, because there are billions of dollars over budget and they took, I believe it was eight years more to complete the project. Um, we're not going to get paid on this thing ever. Their costs are more they're all right. Their operating costs are higher than their revenue. You're never going to get paid on this deal. And that's why we need to renegotiate the deal, because the goal is to get equal ownership rights and to get revenue for the state of Michigan, the United States. So I'm not on a limb because, uh, you see what's happening. The Canadians have agreed to the negotiation and they're going to make a deal. So I'm not out on a limb. It's it's literally happening. That's what's happening right now. So I wouldn't be out on a limb if that's what's happening.

[00:44:20] Reporter

Did you guys.

[00:44:22] House Speaker Matt Hall

No.

[00:44:24] Reporter

About this?

[00:44:26] House Speaker Matt Hall

No. I never spoke to anyone about Brad Williams. Was he fired? Oh, okay. Well, is he fired? I have no idea. Of what? Where was he working? Oh, okay. Yeah. No, I didn't ask anyone to fire Brad Williams. Go ahead.

[00:44:48] Reporter

Are there any conversations about economic development in relation to the budget? Um, last year budget there had been some discussion around brownfields. Anything coming into discussions this year on brownfields. Yes. Last year.

[00:45:03] House Speaker Matt Hall

Oh transformational brownfields. Okay. Yeah. There's a lot brownfields that the Democrats bring up. There's all kinds of brownfields. Um, yeah. So I think those are conversations that would occur side by side with property tax, whether that's this commercial rehabilitation, whether that's the obsolete property, whether it's Egle brownfield changes or transformational brownfield. Those are all things that can be negotiated in the policy room. And if we get a deal on property tax cuts, if we get a deal on, um, hospital price, uh, affordability, board, things like that, um, then, you know, we'll see those type of things move because, um. You know, we're going to have to let the Democrats get some of their priorities too. And, uh, I mean, I would say if the Democrats want to tear down the Renaissance Center, if that's a goal of theirs, then, uh, you know, we'll help them make that happen. But we also need to see property tax cuts and health care affordability and some of these other things. We can all get wins in this deal. Um, the Democrats, the governor, you know, because this is Winnie Brinks and Governor Whitmer's last shot at getting their wins. I can get more wins for four years as speaker. Um, I want to help them get wins too, right now. But we've got to get wins too. So that's why we need an active policy room. But there's no reason that that can hold up the budget conversation. And fortunately, it no longer has. Yeah. Go ahead.

[00:46:39] Reporter

On the budget you're saying you're going to get into the targets and the finer details, but what points have you already kind of identified, or do you expect maybe the major sticking points of getting a final deal done? Are there any of those.

[00:46:51] House Speaker Matt Hall

Uh, what was the last part?

[00:46:53] Reporter

Are there any major points that you've identified or do you expect are going to be perhaps major sticking points in getting final deal with the finer details done?

[00:47:04] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I mean, you know, if the budget's going to be smaller than last year, then you're going to have to make cuts. Right? And I'm hopeful that those cuts will be to waste, fraud and abuse. And so if we're cutting waste, fraud and abuse like the ghost employees I mentioned, there's, uh, that's costing us \$500 million. I mean, just like last year, we got rid of 2000 ghost employees and saved the taxpayers \$300 million. But we couldn't get rid of these other 3000 ghost employees. This year, we could get rid of the other 3000 ghost employees, and that would lower things by 500 million. So that's an example where we should be able to find consensus. You know, if instead the Democrats want to protect all the waste and cut core programs, whether that's cutting funding to schools or local governments or police or, you know, roads or something like that, then we would have a big problem. But if we can steer them to the waste, fraud and abuse and they cut waste, fraud and abuse, then we should be able to do a deal really quickly. Um, I'm hopeful that we'll get targets, uh, today. I'm really hopeful. But we've got to, you know, we've got to negotiate because, um, some of these people are not used to cutting. Now House Republicans, we've been going through every line in the budget, and we know where the waste and the fraud and the abuse is, and we've identified that. And so I think that will be very helpful in making cuts. Um, and then I'm sure the other obstacle will be efforts by legislative Democrats to shove the budget full of pork. You can't have \$1 billion worth of pork in a budget that you got to cut to. So I think that will be hard for some of the subcommittee chairs. But, you know, they had 48 hours last year to cut \$800 million of waste, fraud and abuse from the from the general fund. They're going to have more time to figure it out this time. Yeah. Go ahead.

[00:49:03] reporter

Um, looking at this from the outside, what would you tell people to look for as a signal on whether or not would be able to make the July 1st?

[00:49:14] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I would encourage them to keep looking at my posts on X and to watch my press conferences, and I'll let them know what those signals are. If you see a signal from me that's saying I'm optimistic, then I would take that as a signal. So I try to, uh, I try to keep you guys informed. Uh, I said on Thursday night that there was a glimmer of hope. And I know a lot of you took that to heart reported on that. And, and that still exists. So I'm excited. So I will give you indications.

[00:49:47] reporter

More specific, um, some kind of a policy deal. What, what would, what sort of breakthrough would go like? Okay, we're going to be able to handle this.

[00:50:00] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I think we're doing, you know, we're working the budget and we're trying to make cuts and we're trying to set targets. So if we get a target today, which I think we there's no reason we can't. I mean, um, I think we'll be having more and more of those negotiations today. Um, we get targets done today. You know, you start getting signals that the subcommittees are meeting. You know, we can still make it happen. Um, and we'll see on the policy discussion, you know, I mean, these are a lot of, um, you know, important objectives of Governor Whitmer and Leader Brinks. And hopefully we can help them accomplish some of their goals, but they're going to have to help us lower property taxes, deal with the cost of our electric bills and help us with our health care costs. Yeah. Go ahead.

[00:50:50] Reporter

Speaker, talking about the deals that you're making, has part of the conversation been about expanding the Freedom of Information Act.

[00:51:07] House Speaker Matt Hall

I don't see a scenario where we get FOIA. I've been clear about that. I don't see us doing FOIA. Now what's interesting is I did put up a vote to expand FOIA to the universities, and every single Democrat except for Joe Tait voted against that. So that was kind of interesting. I thought that would be a little, um, carrot. You know, they talk about carrot and stick. I said, you know, this would be a nice carrot for the Democrats if we worked with them to expand FOIA. Um, and then they voted against it. So, um, I think that just tells you how political the FOIA issue really is. Um, you know, uh, so we're not doing FOIA. Um, I tried to do FOIA expansion in every Democrat voted no. Um, and every Republican, almost every Republican voted yes. It was, it was like 50 Republicans voted yes, including me. Um, in terms of priorities of the Democrats, um, you know, you can, you can see a lot of the more Partizan bills they've passed out of their chamber, and they're probably trying to advocate for some of those. And there are some that we can do deals on, and there's some that we can't, you know, and that's what we're working through in the policy room. Uh, go ahead Elena.

[00:52:28] Reporter

Um, can you help us understand the distinction between having a framework in place and the targets which are not yet in place? And any words of encouragement to school districts that are a little nervous? Oh, wow.

[00:52:46] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, so, uh, words of encouragement to school districts, you're going to get an increase. Uh, I think the schools should be happy about that. I mentioned, um, last week, there's \$2 billion more available for the school aid fund this year than there was last year. And I reminded you, remember how hard it was to get \$2 billion more for roads, and how difficult that was for the negotiations last year and how that took months. And ultimately, we had to make a deal that cut about \$1 billion of waste, fraud and abuse. And then we had to figure out what they call decoupling, and then we had to figure out the marijuana tax. Well, \$2 billion just landed in our lap for school aid more than last year. And so I would I would say that's pretty nice. And it's good that we're going to be able to put, uh, put more money to use for schools. So they should be happy about that. The schools are going to get a big increase and they should be happy about that. Um, and that's a good thing, right? That's what we want. We want well-funded schools. Um, the, the difference between the framework and targets. Um, the framework are kind of the bigger picture items.

[00:54:08] House Speaker Matt Hall

So you have to know how much money are you agreeing to spend? You have to know how much tax increases are we going to try to figure out? You have to know, are we taking money for the rainy day fund? And then when you add. So like if you were raising taxes by \$500 million, which were not, then you would know, okay, we have \$500 million more available than what is on the current consensus revenue estimates to spend. Once we decided we're not raising taxes, then we could say, okay, now we've all signed an agreement on the total dollars we're going to spend. Now we do targets, which means we have to divvy that up amongst departments. So that's step two. But you know, this is this is how we did it last time. Last year we did kind of a bigger picture framework. Then we had a second agreement on targets, which means department by department. How much is each department authorized to spend? Um, and then we let the subcommittees go to work. And some of those bigger picture things can only be decided by me. Governor Whitmer and Winnie Brinks. Yeah. Kyle.

[00:55:26] reporter

Mr. speaker, is your position on earmarks changed at all during this budget process as opposed to last year?

[00:55:32] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, every earmark is going to have to go through the whole ethics accountability and transparency plan. Um, and you saw the big changes we made. I mean, the politicians can only request pork spending now that benefits their district. That's a big change because you get these politicians, they represent, um, Traverse City and then they're asking for pork for Lansing. That doesn't make any sense. So we limited so many of the pork spending requests just by requiring the politicians to only request pork that benefits their district. Um, we're not letting the for profit corporations get pork. We're requiring 45 day disclosure and a hearing. And you're seeing Nancy Jenkins conduct many of those hearings. Um, the politician must describe the public benefit. Uh, they must establish that the organization existed. It's just crazy. But in the past, they would give pork spending to organizations that did not exist, and then they would have the taxpayers pay to create the organizations. We stopped that. And so what you're seeing with the public disclosure is that there's a lot fewer pork requests. And those pork requests are more reasonable. Um, because you're having to put your name on it and take ownership of it. And so some of the more shady ones are not even proposed.

[00:56:53] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, and so I've not changed my position on in a weaponized government. Um, I'm fine with local projects being funded that have a public benefit. Um, uh, meaning, uh, you know, if the governor's team is not willing to build a road for political reasons, that that a local legislator can get that. Well, long time neglected funding for a local road or bridge or maybe for a community center or something. But, um, I don't support a lot of the wasteful projects. Um, and I'm fine either way. I mean, maybe we'll agree to do pork in this budget. Maybe we won't. Maybe we'll say, look, because we're cutting, we're not going to do any pork in this budget. Um, I'm fine with that too. But but I'm not, I don't object outright to, uh, local representatives advocating for roads and bridges and dams and infrastructure in their districts. Now, I've not requested a single earmark. I didn't last year. Um, I'm not doing, I don't, I don't do that. But I do understand, um, in some cases the need and we'll just see how much money there is and whether we agree to it. Go ahead Beth.

[00:58:13] Reporter

Uh, last week you said, what is the big issue you guys are looking to bring on new taxes, but also old school. You guys have reached agreement about.

[00:58:25] House Speaker Matt Hall

We did, but I don't I don't want to violate anyone's confidence. Um, I'm not going to violate confidence. I mean, one of the reasons why I'm the greatest negotiator at the Capitol is because I don't violate people's trust or confidence. And, um, I'm not going to go into that any further. I did feel an obligation to share with you what I could without violating any agreements with the Democrats. And that's important because you guys want bipartisanship. Um, and you got to have trust. And so I can't come out and just leak all this stuff. But I did want you guys to know there's a framework. What's that?

[00:59:09] Reporter

I feel like you only reach a bipartisan agreement with The Secret. Why not release that?

[00:59:16] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I, I think that, um, if you were to compare me to the others. I'm the only one that stands up here and tells you guys anything. So I'm doing the best I can, you know, with the people that we work with because we want to get a deal and we want everyone's trust. Yeah. Go ahead.

[00:59:33] Reporter

Will a deal on data centers be reached by July 4th.

[00:59:36] House Speaker Matt Hall

I don't think you'll see a deal on data centers by July 4th. No. I think, um, the Democrats have just introduced bills. I haven't had a chance to look at them. Um, I know Anne Boleyn has been working on some stuff in the house as well, so I don't see a deal on data centers by July 4th. Um, you know, you have hundreds of bills that are sitting in the Senate, that have been developed and thought out and have passed committee and passed the House. I don't think you'll see a deal on something like that, that the Democrats, um, as far as I know, haven't moved through the Senate. Yeah.

[01:00:12] Reporter

You got you mentioned that the legislation you introduced last week on hospital costs is going to move through the House quickly. Do you have a certain time frame for when that could be?

[01:00:21] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I think you're going to see committee move on this very quickly. Um, you know, you could see this go through the house very soon. Um, and, you know, maybe this will be something we make a deal on. Um, but I've not heard the same discussion about data centers. Um, and, and so I, I'm giving you the best answers I have. So I would suggest that the hospital cost review board would be a very good item to make a deal on as we're doing this effort for the budget. Um, I don't think an agreement on regulations on data centers will be ready for July 4th. But, you know, that's something we'll continue to look at and maybe we'll get a deal on later. Did you have something Rick.

[01:01:08] reporter

Did on these are on election bills. Democrats are pushing for them specifically is translating election related materials for non-English voters. What are what are your thoughts on that?

[01:01:24] House Speaker Matt Hall

I haven't seen those bills, but I do not expect that we'll move them.

[01:01:30] reporter

Can you say why.

[01:01:32] House Speaker Matt Hall

Is this part. Is this the what do they call it? This is part of a bigger package.

[01:01:37] reporter

Yeah.

[01:01:38] House Speaker Matt Hall

Yeah. I don't expect we'll do it. Um, that's just my opinion. I don't think we'll do it. Yeah.

[01:01:44] Reporter

Um, data center bills. Is there any specific sticking point for your caucus or is it more just the hope that it could be beneficial to, to strike a deal later on?

[01:01:51] House Speaker Matt Hall

Well, I don't think there's a push from the Democrats to move the bills. Yet you guys can correct me if there's something that happened today. I don't know if the Democrats in the Senate are here today. Um, but if they are and they're moving the bills, we'll take a look at them when they get to the house. But, um, you have different bills that are in different stages and I don't believe these are through the committee or the Senate. Um, and I mentioned Anne Boleyn's been working on some things in the House. And so there are other things that I mean, you compare that to the hospital cost review board where, I mean, I've been talking about that for six months. We've been developing it. Uh, we've been getting feedback on it and this is ready for prime time, the data center stuff. The first time I heard about it from the Democrats, their bills was last Thursday, um, when they did a press conference. So I don't expect it to move fast enough for the budget. So it's really just you got 100 issues. We've got 90 other issues that are pretty well developed. And so I think those will take precedence over a negotiation that needs to be completed by July 1st. Yeah. Did you have something, Dave? Mr. Eggert.

[01:03:15] Reporter

A lot of.

[01:03:16] reporter

Discussions essentially wait until the last session.

[01:03:20] House Speaker Matt Hall

Um, you know, there could be a lame duck session. You know, I'm going to assess whether I think that's advantageous before I decide whether we'll have a lame duck session. We might not do a lame duck session at all. Um, so, you know, I think what I'll do is I'll assess, you know, what do we get done for the budget? Um, and what, what conversations do we have with Governor Whitmer where I think we can still get a good bipartisan deal? I would hope that whatever that deal is would be something that had broad support. You know, I talked about this before. You know, I've we've we're trying to end the lame duck session, meaning we're trying to move legislation that ends the lame duck session. Now Democrats are obstructing that legislation, but we want to end lame duck sessions because what they're doing is this is what Democrats did and other leaders. What they did is they would they would wait until after the election, and then they would pass something like 60% of the whole session's bills after the election. I don't think we should do that. I think we should do the bulk of our work before the election. So then the voters have an opportunity to assess our work, you know, and what they want to do. The Democrats, just like they tried to do last year, last session, when they controlled everything, they want to wait until after the election, and then they want to move all of their very unpopular legislation that the voters would never approve.

[01:05:03] House Speaker Matt Hall

The voters would never vote for Democrats if they knew the unpopular legislation that they want to do, but they wait until after the election, and then they've got two years where they hope the voters forget about it. I would like to end the lame duck session, except for very consensus bills. So if you had a bill that 80% of the people support more than two thirds support, okay, you know, because things come up, right? It might be December. There's a crisis we need to meet, we need to solve a problem. But but it should have broad support. Now, unfortunately, that isn't going to be the law. So we could have a lame duck session. Um and so I'm going to assess how the negotiations are going and whether I think we can make a big deal, a big bipartisan deal that is mutually beneficial and has wins for everybody and is good for the people of Michigan. And if I think we can, we'll have a lame duck session. If I don't think we can, then we won't have a lame duck session. All right. Thanks, everybody. Oh, Colin. And then I got to go because I think session might have started.

[01:06:13] Reporter

It seems like the Senate hasn't been holding of the Appropriations Committee. So it's the same way that the subcommittee of the House. If that doesn't happen that way. Um, is this point of block appropriations forward and concerns about that as well?

[01:06:33] House Speaker Matt Hall

Right. Yeah. One thing Colin said, which is true, is that the Senate Democrats are not having hearings to talk about their pork projects, um, in a transparent manner. And, and that's a problem. And it might impact the number of pork projects they get. I mean, if there's not hearings, they're not following the law. Heat the whole ethics accountability and transparency plan. Then they won't get pork projects. You've got to introduce it. You've got to put your name on it 45 days before a vote. Um, I hope I can confidently say that we'll have a vote within the next 45 days. Um, and that and they need to have a hearing. So I would encourage them to start having hearings if they want to have pork. And that could very well reduce their options for pork spending and could be another contributing factor to why we just say, you know what, we're not going to do any pork spending. So that's very much up in the air. We might do pork spending, but I'm very comfortable doing no pork spending. I'm very fine with that. So we'll see what happens. All right. Thanks everybody. Hope you hope. Hope you got something out of this. All right. Thank.

END OF TRANSCRIPT



