

Benton County
Summary of Major Factors in the Final 2010 Budget and Levy

- The County Board began the 2010 budget process with a commitment to not raise the County property tax levy, recognizing the many challenges facing individuals and businesses during the current economic recession;
- Holding to that commitment, the proposed 2010 levy of \$19,973,765 represents a \$0 increase from 2009;
- With expected tax capacity growth of 2%, the County tax rate will fall from 66.30% to 64.98%;
- Balancing the County budget without increasing taxes was a great challenge, particularly in light of cuts in state funding and falling interest earnings;
- To bring the budget into balance, the County Board needed to develop a funding plan to address a \$1.7 million deficit;
- Revenue losses expected in 2010 make up \$930,000 or 54% of this deficit;
- Step increases and a 19% health insurance increase add \$660,000, or 39% of the deficit;
- Other operating budget increases add another \$117,000 to the deficit (includes utilities, property/Work Comp insurance premiums, and the mental health maintenance of effort payment);
- The budget plan adopted by the County Board employs several elements to balance spending with available resources, including:
 - using \$430,000 in reserves
 - cutting Department operating budgets by \$413,000
 - reducing mileage reimbursement by 10 cents per mile, saving \$25,000
 - making other miscellaneous cuts and revenue increases to net \$130,000 in savings
 - suspending step and longevity salary increases to save \$171,000
 - requiring employees to take 48 hours of furlough in 2010, for a savings of \$317,000, and
 - requiring employees to fund health insurance premium increases, reducing the base budget by \$250,000;
- The proposed budget includes the elimination of four vacant positions (three in Human Services and one in Corrections); the County has been operating under a hiring freeze since December 2008 and plans to continue the hiring freeze indefinitely;
- The choice of furloughs and suspending step/longevity increases is based in the Board's desire to preserve as many County positions as possible;
- Although the budget plan includes employee furloughs, the County has no plans to close County offices and intends to implement the furlough in a manner that will be the least disruptive to services.