

BY CARL GOLDEN

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COMMENTARY

Of the dozens of components which make up the state's unprecedented budget and revenue dilemma, perhaps the most crucial in its impact upon growth,

The Trust has been responsible for bringing thousands of jobs in the construction and building trades to the state.

While the Governor's anti-tax position is understandable in a state whose citizens already carry the highest overall tax burden in the nation, his options with respect to the Trust Fund are not particularly appealing.

He can:

Allow it to expire and try to incorporate a comprehensive and long range capital plan into the uncertainty of year-to-year budgeting.

Adopt a pay-as-you-go program, a choice made virtually impossible given the dismal revenue situation.

Eliminate, scale back or delay planned projects, steps which nearly always result in escalating costs in the future.

As crucial as the economic growth argument is in favor of a tax increase, there is a need to convince a skeptical and cynical public that the money they're being asked to pay will be used exclusively for the services they're promised. Taxpayers are weary and suspicious of repeated promises from government and it will not be easy to overcome those feelings.

The Trust Fund, though, has demonstrated its value and its contribution to the overall economic health of the state is undeniable. While the Governor should be commended for resisting adding to the tax burden of New Jerseyans, there is a strong case to be made that the return on the investment of a modest gas tax increase is

well worth it.

Carl Golden served as press secretary to Govs. Kean and Whitman and is a senior contributing analyst with the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton College.

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Raising the Gasoline tax to fund anything, for any reason, is another example of a political cop-out. An easy, not very well thought o solution to New Jersey's problems.

Raising the Gas Tax sound like a good idea but it's yet another regressive tax plan that will hurt middle and lower income families w