

## Sanford proposes vote on spending

Governor to offer amendment setting constitutional limit  
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### Document Text

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COLUMBIA--Stonewalled by his own GOP-dominated Legislature, Gov. Mark Sanford plans to take his efforts to limit government spending to voters.

Sanford, a Republican, said he will unveil a constitutional amendment to place a ceiling on government spending next week. While no specifics were available, Sanford said his plan is meant to cut down on the politics in the budgeting process.

"Look at the way budgets are constructed," Sanford said, noting how the budget includes projects that appeal to all constituencies. "If you don't define an upper limit ... you will always perpetuate that process" and grow government.

Sanford vetoed 163 items in the \$5.8 billion state budget but was snubbed by lawmakers who voted to override all but 10 cuts.

The education, tourism and economic development projects Sanford wanted to eliminate totaled \$96 million, less than 2 percent of the budget. Sanford said the state should not increase spending during uncertain economic times.

A day after the Senate wrapped up overriding the vetoes, Sanford on Friday held a news conference to praise the 15 representatives and five senators who stuck with him, calling them a growing "reform caucus."

Included in the governor's group of "taxpayer heroes" are Rep. Ben Hagood, R-Mount Pleasant, and Sen. Chip Campsen, R-Isle of Palms. Both voted to sustain a majority of the vetoes.

Earlier in the week, Sanford's office scolded some Republicans who didn't agree his vetoes, but by Thursday the governor took a more positive approach. "I am really encouraged by what I saw in the last couple days," he said. "About a quarter of the House of Representatives on a continual basis made a vote to sustain those (vetoes), which is a far cry from last year."

The state constitution already has a spending cap, but Sanford thinks it's ineffective, said spokesman Will Folks.

The limit allows government to grow at 9-1/2 percent of the total state personal income for the previous calendar year. The budgets for the last two years were \$3.8 billion lower than the ceiling, according to a recent report by the Office of the State budget. "It isn't a true spending limit as far as we are concerned," Folks said.

For Sanford's spending cap to reach voters, it first must pass the Legislature -- the very people the governor annoyed with his wide-ranging vetoes -- and he will need more than his 20 veto friends.

Sanford specifically attacked Rep. Bobby Harrell, R-Charleston, who leads the committee that would receive the governor's proposal. Harrell, who was slammed by Sanford for not being fiscally conservative, actually proposed similar legislation two years ago. It passed the House but stalled in the Senate. Another related piece of legislation from Harrell is pending in a House committee.

"The limit we have now is not nearly strong enough," said Harrell, the House's lead budget writer. "I agree we need a constitutional limit. I look forward to working with the governor to get it done."

Hagood said he supports statutory limits through legislation but isn't sure about a constitutional amendment. "It's

certainly a way to take it to the voters ... but I hadn't thought about that," he said.

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**Abstract (Document Summary)**

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