

San Antonio Express-News

ANOTHER VIEW

Council must show its backbone

BY JESSE ORTIZ

Re: "Show of force on budget day; \$2.4B spending plan keeps uniform health care same," Metro, Sept. 19:

San Antonio firefighters and police officers are among the best compensated in the state.

Over the past several years, the city has cut many civil service jobs in an effort to stay within its city budget. In this day and age, the citizens of San Antonio have to tighten their belts and cut down on much needed things in order to make ends meet.

It is the obligation of every citizen to make do with less so that the city can maintain its budget; by doing so, our taxes do not have to be increased again and again.

Our police officers enjoy a much more generous benefits package than the other city employees. Their health policies cover full premiums for themselves and their families. That is unheard of.

I can see paying the premium for the city employee because they put their life on the line, but also for their families? That is ridiculous and unheard of.

They also benefit from a taxpayer-funded legal fund at their disposal to use for whatever personal legal difficulty they are faced with. And, in addition to all this, the city contributes a large chunk of taxpayer monies to their well being in their post retirement lives when they are no longer working for the taxpayers.

As a taxpayer enduring every increase in taxes, city utilities and every other type of increase for whatever services one can think of, I say enough is enough.

I can see why the audiences are overrun with people wearing police and firefighter t-shirts at every City Council meeting in an attempt to intimidate our elected representatives into letting them have their way.

In a recent story, the Express-News reported that City Manager Sheryl Sculley told the council that the budget would not include changes to the benefit structure for uniform health care or layoffs of uniform or civilian employees, although the funds designated for this purpose were reduced.

The city manager did encourage both the police and firefighters to continue bargaining in good faith.

The City Council should show some backbone and do what is best for the taxpayers of San Antonio.

Jesse Ortiz lives in San Antonio.