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Lawmaker says state ‘being cheap’ in under-funding agencies

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WEST PALM BEACH — Florida Gov. Rick Scott’s veto of budget items that would have sent millions of dollars to Palm Beach County let down legislators from both sides of the aisle who worked together to get them, **Rep. Dave Kerner, D-Lake Worth, told Wednesday’s monthly luncheon of the Economic Forum of Palm Beach County.**



Kerner said continuing to shortchange the state prison and juvenile justice systems and the Department of Children and Families, as well as local courts and court clerks, isn’t a liberal or conservative issue. “I have a hard time understanding that constantly underfunding those agencies is Democrat or Republican,” he said. “There’s a difference between being fiscally conservative and being cheap. And we’re being cheap.”

Because of continuing cuts, “We have judges sitting in courthouses that are not up to code, that mold is growing in them,” Kerner said. “It’s downright embarrassing.” Kerner, 31, is not going back to Tallahassee after his term ends in 2016. He announced May 27 that he will run in 2016 for the Palm Beach County Commission seat that County Mayor Shelley Vana is vacating because she is term-limited.

He said it was disappointing when funding was put in the budget through bipartisan compromises, only to have it fall to Scott’s veto pen. But in general, he said, all legislators, including himself, need to cooperate more. He said not only are lawmakers failing constituents when they don’t, but the gridlock in Tallahassee has driven away top staffers, turning them into “a transient workforce.” “Our best and brightest don’t come for a career,” he said.

“The ideological dysfunction that has plagued our national capital has filtered down to our sovereign state,” Kerner said. “We need to renew our conviction to electing compassionate and compromising men and women into government before we elect Democrats and Republicans.”

Kerner received a standing ovation from the politically diverse audience at the Kravis Center.