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really looking at some significant cuts," Abbott said. "There are also across-the-board cuts of 2 percent, so when you add them all up, it looks like our share, between USD and the medical school, is \$2.3 million - it's a significant hit."

The Republican legislators also proposed to cut the funding for the Opportunity Scholarship by \$2 million, with the intent of finding alternative funding resources for that program.

"It means that the Opportunity Scholarships, are getting cut in half, so any kid that was getting \$1,000 will be getting \$500," Abbott said. "What's going to have to happen, is that to the extent there are cuts (to higher education funding), a big chunk of that is going to have to come back in terms of increased tuition."

"Eighty percent of our budget goes to labor, and we're not exactly overfunded," he said.

Abbott noted that the University of North Dakota, with 13,000 students, has a budget of \$449 million. USD, with its 9,200 students, has a budget of \$150 million.

He added that he would prefer that state legislators not get involved in making specific budget cuts involving higher education.

"If they want to cut funding by 2 percent, then cut by 2 percent, but let the Regents and the university presidents and anybody else that wants to talk about it try to figure out where to make the cuts," Abbott said. "The Legislature should not be micro-managing."

The Associated Press reported March 9 that Gov. Mike Rounds is seeking more details about many of the Republican legislators proposed cuts for fiscal year 2011. The cuts could reduce a childhood vaccination program, courses offered by television to rural schools and the state's economic development efforts, state budget director Jason Dilges said.

"We've got more questions than answers at this point," said Dilges. "I've asked them to show me their math."

After the GOP lawmakers unveiled their proposals, Rounds said many of their ideas would not work. The Republican governor also said he stands behind his proposed spending plan, which would use \$32 million in reserve funds to balance the state budget in the year beginning July 1.

However, members of the Republican legislative minority hope to balance next year's



Maxine Johnson chats with District 17 State Sen. Ben Nesselhuf at the conclusion of Saturday's Cracker Barrel meeting held in the William J. Radigan Fire Hall. (Photo by David Lias)

budget without using reserve funds because they are worried about even bigger budget problems looming in the following years.

One of the biggest parts of the GOP plan would narrow the gap between revenue and spending by \$11.5 million by reducing the size of tax refunds given to large industrial and agricultural processing projects. The budget cannot be finished until lawmakers decide the details of the tax refund measure.

House Republican Leader Bob Faehn of Watertown said GOP lawmakers are sticking to their budget-cutting plan. Senate Republican Leader Dave Knudson of Sioux Falls said legislators will sit down with the governor's budget staff to work out details.

Dilges said he has asked Republican legislative leaders to give him details of how they want some state agencies to respond to the suggested spending cuts. He said some of the proposals could have unintended consequences and

others are flawed because they could cut the same dollars two or three times.

For example, the plan to close the intensive treatment program for women inmates addicted to methamphetamine would affect nearly 100 inmates and those in after-care, Dilges said. It's unclear whether those inmates would be turned free or put into the main women's prison, he said.

A \$300,000 cut would remove about half the funding for a program that provides courses over a television network to rural schools, Dilges said. But he said lawmakers need to provide more information on what courses or services they want to eliminate.

The GOP proposal would cut \$7 million by a 2 percent across-the-board cut to all programs except K-12 education and Medicaid, the state-federal program that provides medical services to low-income people.

Dilges said a \$4 million cut in personal services and

another \$4 million cut in travel, equipment and supplies would also amount to across-the-board cuts. The general across-the-board cuts, combined with the cuts in personal services and equipment, would add up to cuts of 6 percent or more to agencies, he said.

"There's not \$15 million of fat that's floating around in state government that we can do without and not have to discontinue services," Dilges said.

The cuts also could have unintended consequences such as preventing South Dakota Public Broadcasting from getting some federal matching money and reducing a Health Department program that vaccinates children for mumps, measles and other diseases, Dilges said.

A \$1 million cut in the Department of Tourism and State Development is likely to hamper economic development efforts because tourism promotion does not use any general state funds, he said.

Saturday morning, Nesselhuf speculated that much of the continuing debate over the proposed budget cuts would take place in the state joint Appropriations Committee.

"This is what's frustrating about that process," he said. "Those folks lock themselves away for the entire session, and it's usually the night before our last day of session that all of the amendments show up, and that's when they actually vote on the appropriations bill."

"It's irritating," Nesselhuf said, "because it doesn't matter when the last day of session is. We won't have the final numbers until the day before that last day, so no one can make any votes until the day before. It's a broken process."

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Sanford Vermillion recognizes Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

Sanford Vermillion is recognizing Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month by encouraging patients to schedule a potentially life-saving colonoscopy.

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month. This year, an estimated 149,000 people nationwide will be diagnosed with a form of colorectal cancer. Early detection means many of those cancers can be cured.

Colorectal cancer is 90 percent treatable when detected early.

Men and women over the age of 50 are at risk for colorectal cancer and should be screened.

Patients with a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps may need to be screened at a younger age, and have follow-up exams at more frequent intervals.

"Some warning signs of colorectal cancer include change in bowel habits or blood in the stool, unexplained anemia, unexplained weight loss, fatigue or vomiting. Anyone experiencing warning signs should see their regular physician and schedule a colorectal cancer screening," said Fernando Escobar, MD, FACS.

Colonoscopy uses a thin, flexible tube with a light and camera attached to examine the lining of the large intestine. The procedure takes about 30 minutes and is performed under sedation.

Local surgeon Fernando Escobar, MD, board certified in general surgery regularly provides colonoscopies at Sanford Hospital Vermillion. He is available to perform laparoscopic procedures as well as other common procedures and general surgeries.

To schedule an appointment for a colorectal cancer screening, call Sanford Clinic Vermillion at (605) 624-9111.

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- USD Women's Tennis Saturday, March 20 at Creighton University in Omaha, NE (all day).

- Free Tax Preparation by certified Law and Business Students Saturday, March 20. VITA will be filing simple tax returns for students and low income persons at the Vermillion Public Library from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Bring all necessary documents, (i.e., social security cards, all W2's, 1099s, interest statements, etc.)

- USD Music Recital Saturday, March 20 at 3 p.m. in Farber Hall. Presented by Rachel LaForge, Graduate

Cello Recital. Free and open to the public.

- Music Concert Saturday, March 20 at 7:30 p.m. USD Chamber Singers perform in Vermillion's United Church of Christ sanctuary. Free and open to the public.

Upcoming Events - Mark Your Calendars!

- Boy Gets Girl March 24-27 at 7:30 p.m., and March 28 at 2 p.m. at USD Arena Theatre. Reservations: 605-677-5400.

- Vermillion Middle School Spring Picture Day Thursday, March 25.

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