

Tuesday, May 10, 2011

Kasich takes aim, fires

Governor rips nursing-home lobby, says tax cut possible in '12

By Joe Vardon

MASON, Ohio - In a suburban Cincinnati facility where tooling for engines used by the military is made, Gov. John Kasich unleashed a volley of verbal missiles at Ohio's nursing-home lobby yesterday.

Kasich, whose speech was scheduled as an event to stump for his two-year, \$55.6 billion budget proposal, also said that if the state holds the line on spending this year, "we will have a tax cut next year."

The governor declined to disclose the type or amount of tax cut after his speech. He has in the past floated the idea of eliminating Ohio's income tax.

But Kasich was largely focused on the nursing-home lobby, which got his attention with an ad paid for by the Ohio Health Care Association that began airing on Friday.

Kasich accused the lobby of using political donations to win cash for votes and made a call to arms in the Senate to uphold \$427 million in cuts to nursing homes that were approved as part of the budget by the House last week.

"The process of the nursing homes winning every battle and budget fight in the name of special interests must stop," Kasich said to local elected officials and members of greater Cincinnati's business community who assembled at Rhinestahl Corp. in Mason.

The 30-second television ad opens with an elderly woman in a bed and a picture of Kasich in the foreground. It ends with a condemnation of the "Kasich cuts," a hand pulling a plug out of the wall, a flat-line EKG and a message to call your state senator "before it's too late."

Kasich's budget would expand home care for Medicaid-eligible Ohioans and cut the rate paid to nursing homes.

"This nursing-home industry, the ones that are now putting these ads on television to scare our senior citizens, it's not acceptable," Kasich said.

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