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# Many locals split with party ranks

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HARTFORD - State Rep. Christel Truglia, D-Stamford, stood to one side of the House of Representatives chamber yesterday listening as Minority Leader Lawrence Cafero, R-Norwalk, railed against her party's tax plan.

Although none of them rose to join Cafero in speaking out against the proposal, Truglia and Stamford's four other Democratic representatives decided they would buck party leadership and join the GOP in opposing the plan.

"It's hard for me," Truglia said. "But we sort of have to draw a line in the sand."

Whether the group will accomplish anything beyond making a statement remains to be seen.

"They're good guys and I like them a lot," House Speaker James Amann, D-Milford, said after the vote. "They have to understand they also receive a lot of things for Stamford."

Over the holiday weekend, word circulated among legislators that Amann, D-Milford, and Senate President Donald Williams, D-Brooklyn, would call a vote on their tax package, which hikes the income tax on Connecticut's wealthiest residents, many of whom live in lower Fairfield County.

Democratic lawmakers from southwestern Connecticut in recent weeks convinced their leadership to raise the starting household income for the tax increase from \$190,000 to about \$270,000.

"I did everything they asked for," Amann said yesterday.

But Stamford's delegation, dissatisfied their city would send an extra \$61 million in income taxes to Hartford but not receive greater state aid for education and other needs, refused to cooperate on the tax vote.

State Sen. Andrew McDonald was one of five Senate Democrats to vote against tax package early yesterday morning.

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Truglia and Stamford state Reps. Gerald Fox III, Carlo Leone, James Shapiro and William Tong followed McDonald's lead yesterday afternoon. They joined eight other Democrats, including Joseph Mioli, D-Westport, and Tom Drew, D-Fairfield, plus Cafero and his 43 House Republicans. The package passed by a 92 to 57 vote.

"We've sent a message, loud and clear, that this plan doesn't work for Stamford," Shapiro said. "If this is the (tax) plan in a year when there's a surplus, what would the taxes look like for Stamford in a bad year?"

Leone said by working together as a delegation, party leaders "have to talk to us as a group. At the least we hope they give us the respect to address our concerns."

But Fox said the plan could backfire and the group also could face repercussions as the budget process proceeds. Shapiro said he and his colleagues faced plenty of arm-twisting over the past few days.

"But we have worked very well with the speaker in the past, and we believe we will continue to do so," Fox said.

Unlike Stamford, Norwalk's Democrats were split on the tax package. While state Sen. Bob Duff strategized with McDonald in opposing the income tax increase, state Reps. Bruce Morris and Christopher Perone voted yes in the House.

Morris had decided to vote in favor of the plan on Tuesday, arguing the accompanying income tax cuts and expanded property tax credits would help his middle- and lower-income constituents.

As of late Tuesday, Perone said he was planning to vote no, but yesterday changed his mind.

Perone said afterward he appreciated Amann's efforts to raise the threshold of the tax hike.

"Originally it was \$190,000 - that's who Hartford considered rich," Perone said. "We got it up to \$270,000. . . . That's not hard to defend."

But Perone said he also was swayed by a commitment from Democratic leadership to consider more school aid for Norwalk.

"They haven't closed the door and want to work with me," he said "(That's) why I could get behind this."

But he also said there is no guarantee Norwalk will see any more money in the Democratic budget. Perone said the difference between himself and Duff is the senator represents all of Norwalk and part of Darien.

"This is going to help 80 percent of my district," Perone said. "It's the realities of who we represent."

Freshman state Rep. Kimberly Fawcett, a Democrat who represents Fairfield and Westport, voted for the tax package.

Fawcett said although the general impression is her wealthy district will be hit hard by the Democrats' income tax hike, according to her research, only 10 percent of her Fairfield constituents and 23 percent of her Westport constituents will pay more.

"I feel extremely comfortable with it," said Fawcett, who was elected in a traditionally Republican