

MY VIEW: DAVID WARRICK

Build better state agency, don't tear it down

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In the Dec. 4 My View by Mitch Roob, secretary of the Family and Social Services Administration, he continually pointed to a broken system within his agency. He listed outmoded computers and programs, overworked employees, lack of access and "bankers' hours" as reasons for sub-par services. He then throws up his hands as if these problems can't be fixed within his agency. They can.

Indiana must repair its public assistance eligibility system to better serve our state's most vulnerable residents and provide them with the services they need. Selling it off for 10 years -- for more than \$1 billion in Hoosier tax dollars -- to an out-of-state private corporation, as the Daniels' administration has proposed, is not the answer.

Roob's sole solution for the problems is a sweeping privatization of government services. That's not a solution, it's an abdication of his responsibility to the citizens of Indiana.

There are many positives that Roob could build on to make his agency better. FSSA state employees already perform their jobs better than the national average, according to federal government reports. Employees also cut their error rates in half from 2003 to 2004 when claims filed increased by more than 1.2 million.

Indiana state workers have earned state government high performance bonus awards from the federal government in fiscal years 1999 through 2004, receiving \$9 million in 1999 and rising each year to \$10.3 million in 2004. It is apparent that the foundation and the workers are there to improve the FSSA.

Gov. Mitch Daniels vowed to fix problems, not run away from them. Nearly a year into to his administration, however, he has left a trail of broken promises. He promised to work hard to promote Indiana businesses and signed a "Buy Indiana" executive order as his first order of business after taking his oath of office. Since Jan. 10, more than \$539 million has gone to out-of-state companies.

Candidate Daniels also promised state workers that his administration would not cause one state employee to lose their job. He broke that promise as his second order of business as governor when he struck down 16 years of collective bargaining for state employees and began privatizing state services.

Daniels promised voters that decisions would not be made about their communities from Indianapolis. As governor, the Daniels' administration broke that promise by closing 27 license branches across the state and centralizing employment claims services to Indianapolis. Now he's bent on selling off the Indiana toll road and state hospitals to corporations that will try to squeeze profits from Hoosier tax dollars.

Daniels and Roob should work to build a better FSSA, not sell it off to a corporation that cares more about profits than people and won't have to answer to the people of Indiana.

Mr. Roob, help FSSA employees build a better agency, don't tear it down. The Daniels administration owes it to the people who need the services FSSA provides -- and they owe it to all Hoosier taxpayers.