

Amann sharpens ax to trim state budget

ADVANCE ALBANY BUREAU

ALBANY — Assemblyman Edward J. Amann, chairman of a subcommittee of downstate GOP assemblymen charged with finding areas in Gov. Rockefeller's record budget where cuts may be made, has submitted a score of proposals to the Ways and Means Committee.

These include elimination of one state office, cancellation of all funds for a state project on the contention they will not be needed this year—and general cuts across the board—cut the type of "meat-ax" budget-cutting which the governor has been quoted as saying he will not stand for.

As ranking majority member of the Assembly Ways and Means Committee, the Staten Island legislator was recently named by its chairman, Assemblyman Willis H. Stephens, to head a subcommittee of six Republican assemblymen from Brooklyn, Queens and Nassau County to search out possible areas for reduction of the budget.

OTHERS NAMED

Other members of the Ways and Means Committee were named to head similar subcommittees throughout the state to discuss and likewise make recommendations that might permit substantial cuts in the \$8.4 billion budget.

Amann reported that he sub-

mitted to Stephens yesterday a recommendation that the 7½ per cent cost of living increase in benefits for welfare clients throughout the state be eliminated, at a savings of more than \$13 million.

He also recommended an across the board cut in the budget, the size to be determined by the Ways and Means Committee; that funds for the American Revolution Centennial Committee, which is planning a statewide celebration for 1975, be eliminated this year, and that sharp cuts be made in appropriations for the City University, "where costs have skyrocketed as a result of the open admissions policy.

ASK REDUCTION

"We have suggested that the committee scrap a \$5-million program for teacher retraining in the New York City school system," he said. "We have also proposed a sharp reduction in the civil defense budget, a program which should be financed by the federal government. We have suggested a substantial cutback in printing by various state offices and agencies. A majority of these agencies have had enormous printing bills and most of the cost is due to publishing elaborate brochures dealing with programs under their jurisdiction. The work could be greatly simplified at great savings to the taxpayers."

The assemblyman said he

has recommended liquidation of the Office of Planning Coordination. "An agency which serves little worthwhile purpose." He said elimination of this office would save \$3 million. Its work, he feels, could be assumed by other agencies.

He blue-pencilled a \$300,000 appropriation for moving state agencies in Manhattan into the new World Trade Center, now under construction. He said the center will not be completed in time for the state agencies to move into it this year and the appropriation, therefore, is not needed this year.

The assemblyman noted that Gov. Rockefeller has conceded the budget must be cut, but has indicated he would not support a \$700-million slashing, as urged by leading Republican lawmakers. According to Amann, the Ways and Means Committee is still "shooting for a \$700-million cut." But he acknowledged that pressure is mounting against cuts in their specific areas by school, health, welfare, cultural and other groups throughout the state.

WON'T BELIEVE

"They refuse to believe," he said; "that we can't provide what they want without additional taxes, which we are trying to avoid. I believe, however, that there will have to be some tax hikes."

State law requires that the Legislature adopt the budget by April 1, which is only two

weeks off, but there is much evidence that this could be delayed. Amann noted that of the 79 Republicans in the Assembly, the votes of 76 are needed to adopt a budget. He acknowledged that at the present time Republican leaders couldn't rally anywhere near that figure in support of the budget as proposed.

GOP leaders are constantly conferring with fellow-members of their political faith in an effort to have them support specific cuts that might affect their community, but until a new budget is drafted by the Ways and Means Committee, it cannot be advanced.

"The Democrats," Amann said, "have abdicated their responsibility. None of the 71 members are even participating in the discussions and have made no recommendations. They keep making groundless assertions that more money can be provided without any need for tax increases. As it appears now, when the budget does come up for a vote, we can expect a solid Democratic vote in opposition."