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Blanchard scoffs at Whitmer, Hall deal on roads, budget forcing Senate to act

House [Speaker Matt Hall](#)'s strategy to strike a deal with [Gov. Gretchen Whitmer](#) on road funding and the budget to put leverage on majority Democrats in the Senate to capitulate and support that agreement is unrealistic, former Gov. Jim Blanchard said Monday.

Blanchard, a close Whitmer ally made available for an interview by the Whitmer communications office, was asked whether he would have pursued a similar course between 1984-90 when Republicans (with Majority Leader John Engler) controlled the Senate and Democrats (with Speakers Gary Owen Sr. and Lew Dodak) controlled the House.

In other words, would he have agreed to work out a deal on a top issue with Engler and expected Owen or Dodak and the House Democratic Caucus to sign onto it?

"Highly unlikely," Blanchard said.

"They would have felt betrayed," he said. "And they have their priorities. They were all elected. They have their pet projects and their favorite departments. They are separate branch of government, an independent branch."

The House and the Senate must do the bulk of the work to get a budget done, and Hall needs to recognize he can't ignore the Senate, Blanchard said.

"He needs to show them respect and not expect the governor to undercut them," he said. "It's not helpful to expect her to undercut her one majority in the Senate who produced a budget on time and have been working diligently."

The reality, however, is if House Republicans want a shutdown, it will happen, he said.

Blanchard said budget impasses in divided government are common. They happened throughout his tenure. But Republicans did not want a shutdown, and one never occurred. He noted the completion of the 1990-91 fiscal year budget in 1990 was delayed amid House Democratic upset that he didn't recommend enough funding for social services and Engler suggested repurposing the funds for schools.

"The reality is the Senate and the House are going to have to work this out, and they know it," he said. "It shouldn't be as difficult as seems to be. We're talking about serving the people of our state."

– By Zach Gorchow

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