Energy, agriculture to face challenges from those seeking policy changes By EARL WATT • Daily Leader Last year, the State Legislature had to find a way to make necessary cuts to address a struggling state economy.

There will need to be more cuts to make the balance budget, according to State Representative Bill Light.

“Revenues are extremely down,” he told a group of credit union employees during a meeting at Ruffino’s Restaurant last week.

“We did a lot of cutting last year, and that will make it more difficult to cut this year.”

One area where discussions have already begun is in consolidation.

Light said that some lawmakers are looking at school districts, city and county governments as ways to make cuts.

“I come from Rolla,” he said. “Consolidation is a concern of mine, and I will oppose it. It is detrimental to small communities. I don’t look forward to debating it.”

Representative Larry Powell discussed the role of animal agriculture and how it is coming under attack from animal rights activists groups.

“The Humane Society doesn’t want animal agriculture,” Powell said.

“They only want free range animals. The free range is owned by the federal government, and they won’t even drill oil on it.”

California has had legislation designed to protect animals, but it has adversely affected the poultry industry, according to Powell.

“California passed Proposition 2 so chickens can flap their wings and turn around,” he said. “Now, there are no more eggs in California.

The Humane Society comes out with ads saying don’t abuse a puppy or cat and tug at heartstrings, and then they go after the farmers.”

Powell also said energy policy is being affected by environmental policy as non-profit activist groups continue to have influence on lawmakers.

California is paying 30 cents per kilowatt hour because of environmental rules,” Powell said. “No legislator wants to destroy the environment. But don’t use computer modeling to say we are destroying the world. We need less regulations.”

Powell said the excessive regulations have led to high start-up costs for ag-related businesses.

“To start a 100-cow dairy would cost $385,000, and that doesn’t include land cost,” he said. “I used to milk by hand. Today, the health inspector would say that I should be dead. The fact is we cannot allow the nonprofits to run our government. You talk about financial literacy programs — financial literacy needs to happen in Washington.”