



MISSOURI SENATE

Rob Mayer
25th Senate District

JEFFERSON CITY

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 331
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Column for the Week
of December 24, 2007**

**Contact: Irene Murray
(573) 751-3859**

The Price of a Good Education

JEFFERSON CITY — As the new chairman of the Senate Education Committee, I'm proud to oversee the process that we lawmakers will use to monitor the funding and policies for our public elementary and secondary schools as well as our institutes of higher learning. In addition, as vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I will have my finger on the pulse of what our revenue situation will be, so good decisions can be made for the spending priorities of this state, especially in the field of education. In that vein, I'm pleased about the governor's latest comprehensive higher education package for students in this state.

The plan calls for another massive increase in needs-based scholarships, additional increases in funding for Missouri colleges and universities, and funding for a new health care education program for students.

First of all, the proposal asks for a significant increase in the state's investment in college scholarships to \$100 million — a \$27.5 million jump from last year's funding for scholarships and a quadrupling of needs-based scholarship money compared to numbers from three years ago. The expanded Access Missouri Scholarship program will level the playing field and make sure Missouri's neediest students receive aid. Our best and brightest can learn only if they can afford to go to college. We want to make sure that they'll be able to go.

Next, Missouri colleges and universities will see their direct state funding increase by \$40 million, a 4.4 percent increase from last year. This will help our schools meet the ever-increasing demands put on them to provide a world-class education.

This proposal will build on the significant funding increases we've made through last session's Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative, bringing \$335 million for much-needed infrastructure improvements to Missouri's colleges and universities. During the last three years, we've also increased money to our elementary and secondary schools to the tune of more than a

half billion dollars, making sure our students have the kind of basic education they need when they get to college.

As the husband of a lifelong school teacher, I know how important a good education can be. I feel confident that with ideas such as this one Missouri can continue to educate our children and college students at a level that will make them leaders once they've left their studies for life in the real world.

-END-

Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.