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Crowell Calls for Reform of M.D.F.B. In Spite of \$342 Million Deficit, Spending Continues

State Board Gives KC Chiefs \$25 Million in Tax Credits

JEFFERSON CITY– Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau, today called for fundamental reform of the Missouri Development Finance Board (MDFB). The MDFB recently approved \$25 million in tax credits for the Kansas City Chiefs.

“In this tight economy, there are families throughout Missouri who are struggling to pay the bills and are worried about their jobs,” said Sen. Crowell. “We are facing a \$342 million shortfall in 2009 and a large shortfall in 2010. It is not the time to be spending limited taxpayer dollars on a professional sports team.”

While some of the funding will go towards improvements at Arrowhead Stadium, a portion of the money will be used to build a new Chiefs training camp in St. Joseph. According to Jason Noble of the Kansas City Star, the Chiefs will “chip in \$10 million toward a new \$13.45 million indoor training facility at Missouri Western State University,” which will be used by the Chiefs only three weeks a year and will require either private funds of \$3.45 million or an additional state appropriation in that amount to make up the funding gap. (*See the full Kansas City Star article below*)

Sen. Crowell recently prefiled [Senate Bill 113](#) that would repeal the provision that currently allows the MDFB to approve large tax credit awards. The bill limits the board to the standard \$10 million dollar annual cap on issuance of development fund contribution tax credits. Currently, the board has the ability to exceed the annual spending cap with the agreement of the commissioner of Administration, the director of the Department of Economic Development and the director of the Department of Revenue. Sen. Crowell seeks to eliminate this provision and replace it with legislative approval.

“We are the ones that must pass a balanced budget and thus should be the ones approving these projects,” said Sen. Crowell. “At this point it is my hope that the Commissioner of Administration, the Department of Economic Development, and the Department of Revenue do not allow the MDFB to again exceed its cap of \$10 million and deny these tax credits. Twenty-five million dollars spent on the Chiefs today is \$25 million we must cut from Medicaid, education, or autism funding tomorrow. The process which allows an

expenditure of this type to occur without legislative approval and review is wrong and must be reformed.”

“Missouri is one of the 10 best economically situated states in the nation right now thanks to careful and responsible spending,” said Sen. Crowell. “This pattern of fiscal responsibility will not continue if we continue to allow boards to spend like there is no tomorrow.”

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Posted on Tue, Dec. 16, 2008

Chiefs tax break brings training camp to Missouri in 2010

By JASON NOBLE
The Star's Jefferson City correspondent

JEFFERSON CITY | Forget about that 450-mile drive to Wisconsin. As early as 2010, the Kansas City Chiefs will be holding training camp right up the road.

The Missouri Development Finance Board unanimously approved \$25 million in state tax credits Tuesday for what is expected to be a \$50 million project to build a new indoor training facility at Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, improve Arrowhead Stadium and make infrastructure upgrades at the Truman Sports Complex.

Although the facility in St. Joseph will be state-owned and be operated by the university, the Chiefs will chip in \$10 million of its \$13.45 million construction cost and hold their three-week training camp there each summer for at least 10 years.

The University of Wisconsin-River Falls has hosted the Chiefs for camp since 1991. Camp was held at William Jewell College in Liberty from 1963 to 1990, and the team's departure for another state was a major disappointment to many fans.

Bringing the Chiefs back to Missouri — along with the fans who have followed them north — was a major factor in securing the state aid. Officials said they hoped to begin designing and building the training facility immediately so the Chiefs could open camp there in 2010.

“The opportunity to come back home, for our fans, would be great,” said Chiefs coach

Herm Edwards. “Anytime you can come back home and have your training camp, it brings value to your fans. They can drive and come watch you every day, and I think our players can get the residuals of being around our fans every day in practice.”

Board members and supporters said the project could be a great economic benefit to the state, as fans who currently trek to Wisconsin to attend camp will now spend that money in Missouri.

St. Joseph officials have been in discussions with the Chiefs about a move. Last offseason, the team held its final practice in June at Spratt Stadium on the Missouri Western campus.

“We’re extremely glad that it passed and that this possibility that we’ve talked about for two or three years looks like it’s going to become a reality,” said St. Joseph Deputy Mayor Mike Hirter. “Without a doubt it brings people in, brings tourism to the city, which of course equates to dollars spent in the city. So there’s no question that it will be an economic boon.”

The Chiefs no doubt hope it will be a boon to them, too. The approval of the tax credits comes at a time when the Chiefs, who are currently 2-12, need to get fans fired up and sell some tickets. Bringing the Chiefs closer to home and giving fans a good early look could be a benefit to a team that no longer is an automatic sellout.

These new projects are in addition to the renovation work already under way at Arrowhead and Kauffman stadiums. That \$575 million project won \$50 million in state tax incentives in 2006 and is financed primarily by a voter-approved sales tax.

Unlike many projects receiving tax credits, all the work done on this one will benefit publicly owned facilities: The sports complex is owned by Jackson County, while the training center will be the property of Missouri Western.

Senate Majority Floor leader Charlie Shields, a Republican who represents St. Joseph, said bringing the Chiefs to Missouri Western would give the city a needed morale boost.

“This is one of those projects that I believe is transformational in terms of how a community looks at itself,” Shields said, noting that in the last 15 years St. Joseph has been the victim of natural disasters and lost several major employers.

Not everyone, however, was pleased with the plans.

Sen. Wes Shoemyer, a Monroe County Democrat, argued that the state’s budget was too lean to justify giving \$25 million to a professional football team, and suggested that the development finance board’s decision could have repercussions in the General Assembly.

“What you’re going to do is raise the ire of the folks down the street,” Shoemyer said, referring to lawmakers, “and get this board handcuffed so when we really need you, and really need the things you’re able to do, we won’t be able to do them.”

Individual tax credits awarded by the board are generally capped at \$10 million, although larger credits are allowed with approval from a committee of three state department executives, said Gary McElyea, a spokesman for Lt. Gov. Peter Kinder.

It's not unusual for proposed credits to exceed the cap, and it's common for them to be approved.

The Chiefs expect to have one final summer in River Falls, which has served them well. The team moved camp under the direction of then-coach Marty Schottenheimer, who liked the "boot-camp" feel and the opportunity to build camaraderie away from Kansas City.

The Chiefs had the benefit of being able to practice against other nearby teams such as the Minnesota Vikings, and the mild Wisconsin summer weather was a bonus. The average high temperature in Kansas City in late July and early August approaches 90 degrees.

But coming home — or close to it — is nice, too.

"As a Chiefs fan, this excites me," Missouri Western football coach Jerry Partridge said. "It's a giant Christmas present."

The Star's Randy Covitz and Meredith Rodriguez contributed to this report. To reach Jason Noble, call 573-634-3565 or send e-mail to jnoble@kcstar.com.

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