

Senator Chuck Gross

Results of the 2003 Questionnaire

Prioritizing state government services (beginning with the highest priority and ending with the lowest)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Elementary & Secondary Education | 7. Mental Health |
| 2. Health | 8. Environmental Protection |
| 3. Economic Development | 9. Higher Education |
| 4. Public Safety | 10. Corrections |
| 5. Transportation | 11. Other (various topics) |
| 6. Social Services | |

Utility Regulation and Cost Recovery:

Rates charged to consumers by investor-owned utilities in Missouri are to be just and reasonable and provide shareholders a reasonable return on investment, as determined by the Public Service Commission (PSC). When a utility's cost to provide service rises, the utility requests a rate increase and approval is given after a rate case process proves the increase to be just and reasonable. A rate case includes an investigation of the utility's financial status, the holding of public and formal evidentiary hearings, and may take more than 18 months to complete. According to the PSC, the cost to a utility for one rate case can be as much as \$400,000, and this amount is passed along to customers as part of the increase in the cost of the utility service. Regulated utilities are seeking approval to recover reasonable increases in their costs of purchased energy and needed infrastructure improvements on a more timely basis, outside of the traditional rate case procedure.

	Number	Percent
A. As these increases are generally allowable anyway, utilities should be allowed to pass along these costs without filing a rate case. Utility charges would more accurately reflect the true cost of the service, consumers and taxpayers would save by having fewer costly rate cases, and utilities would be able to more quickly replace aging pipes and other infrastructure.	102	9.2%
B. As these increases are generally allowable anyway, utilities should be allowed to pass along these costs without filing a rate case, provided their rates are subject to review at regularly scheduled intervals to ensure that charges to consumers are justified.	539	48.6%
C. Utilities should not be allowed to recover any increased costs outside of a full rate case proceeding; rate cases should be instituted each time a utility requests a rate increase for whatever purpose.	468	42.2%
Total Response to this question:	1109	100%

Tort Reform

The legal system has come under increasing criticism that it is much to blame for reducing the availability and/or driving up the cost of insurance, health care, and consumer goods as it invites excessive litigation and extravagant awards for damages.

	Number	Percent
A. Changes in the law to establish reasonable monetary limits for punitive damages, time limits for filing suit, and restrictions where lawsuits can be filed will help considerably to reduce the costs of insurance, health care, and consumer goods and increase their availability to consumers.	686	60.9%
B. Requiring that the party who loses a lawsuit must pay all of the court costs and the attorney fees for the prevailing party would halt the filing of most unmerited lawsuits, significantly reducing the collective costs to the public associated with such lawsuits.	276	24.5%
C. The legal system is being made the scapegoat for business, particularly in the insurance and health care industries. The public's ability to utilize the civil court process when they suffer harm and to recover damages in amounts acceptable under current law should not be restricted in any way.	164	14.6%
Total Responses to this question:	1126	100%

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State General Revenue:

State legislators are responsible for passing annual state budgets through appropriating revenues to fund the services and programs of state government. Funds appropriated are state tax collections (general revenues), funds received from the federal government, and other funds. Federal funds must generally be spent as dictated by the federal government. "Other" funds are largely those deposited into more than 250 different special fund accounts directly serving as many different state programs, such as the Motorcycle Safety Trust Fund, Treasurer's Information Fund, Board of Geologist Registration Fund, Missouri Air Emission Reduction Fund, and Boll Weevil Suppression and Eradication Fund. The remaining general revenue funds account for roughly one-third of the money appropriated. Even though the state legislature reduced the number of these special accounts in 1983, special accounts have increased again in number to well over the pre-1983 level.

	Number	Percent
A. As various state programs and services are established, it makes sense to set up individual accounts to receive related fees which are used to run each program, with excess receipts accumulating in each account for program expenditures into the future.	216	19.6%
B. It makes little sense to split up state revenues into a multitude of separate accounts. Most of these accounts need to be abolished and the revenues put into the state's general revenue account to strengthen the state's cash flow, allow greater budget flexibility, and to secure control of the funds with the legislators, those elected by the voters to decide how state dollars are spent.	549	49.9%
C. All special fund balances over a certain amount in any existing special account should be transferred to the state's general revenue account and the establishment of any new special accounts for state revenues should be strictly limited.	335	30.5%
Total Responses to this question:	1100	100%

Medicaid:

Medicaid was created in the 1960s to provide access to health care for the country's poorest citizens and the disabled. The federal government requires states to provide a basic level of service and states may choose to offer optional services and expand eligibility requirements. From 1997 to 2002, Missouri's Medicaid costs almost doubled to over \$4.4 billion, and the number of Missourians enrolled in Medicaid increased by nearly 50% to almost 871,000 people. These increases have been largely attributed to higher health care costs, particularly for prescription drugs, and the increased number of children and parent enrollees, particularly through the state's Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIPs) signed into law by Governor Carnahan in 1998, extending Medicaid benefits to families with incomes over \$50,000. With Medicaid resources spread so thin, many are unable to access the health care services to which they are entitled. The federal Congressional Budget Office is predicting Medicaid costs to continue to rise annually by between 8% and 9% through 2011.

	Number	Percent
A. Missouri needs to realign its Medicaid program to more closely follow federal requirements, reducing or eliminating optional services and restricting eligibility, so that the most needy are able to receive services for which they are eligible.	371	33.8%
B. Missouri needs to make significant changes to its Children's Health Insurance Program to ensure that it is not run as an expanded welfare program, but indeed operated as an insurance program for lower-income families who absolutely cannot secure healthcare coverage for their children through an employer-assisted or private insurer.	481	43.9%
C. If Missouri intends to maintain its current Medicaid programs, the state must institute considerable co-pay requirements for those who exceed federal eligibility requirements and for services beyond those mandated by the federal government.	245	22.3%
Total responses to this question:	1097	100%