



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**May 9, 2003**

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## **MISSOURI LEGISLATURE GIVES FINAL APPROVAL TO \$18.9 BILLION BUDGET FOR FY 2004**

On Friday, the General Assembly gave final approval to the Fiscal Year 2004 Budget. Our state – like most states – is facing a terrible fiscal crisis. The budget we passed didn't please anyone, but it was the best we could do with the resources we had available. The Republican majority stood by our pledge not to raise the taxes of the people of Missouri.

The \$18.9 billion operating budget funds essential programs and services, without raising taxes.

As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I can assure you that this is a good budget. I believe it's the best possible budget that could be developed for our state at this time. This budget is not what is desirable, but it is what's possible.

The total operating budget approved by the governor totals \$18,961,902,430. Unlike the governor's budget, which was balanced by using more than \$730 million in revenues dependent on tax increases similar to those rejected by voters late last year, the legislature primarily balances the budget by tightening government spending in a number of areas.

This includes reducing the budgets of statewide elected officials and lawmakers, eliminating more than 700 positions – primarily vacant, mid-level managers, eliminating welfare payments to foreign immigrants in Missouri and eliminating the governor's Washington, D.C. office, which existed primarily to lobby Congress.

A total of \$4.478 billion was appropriated for Elementary and Secondary Education, and \$1.013 billion for Higher Education

Social Services will receive \$5.515 billion, the Department of Mental Health will receive \$929 million, and the Department of Health will receive \$451 million.

We were successful in maintaining funding for a number of key programs:

- Fully funded sheltered workshops – \$18.6 million.
- Preserved the children’s health insurance program for families earning up to 300 percent of poverty levels.
- Fully funded the SeniorRx Program to help older citizens with prescription costs.
- Preserved funding for “safety net” hospitals that care for the poorest cases.

Gov. Bob Holden has made numerous threats about vetoing one or all of the budget bills, and calling the legislature into special session.

I think this would be a terrible mistake on the part of the governor. A special session would cost the state approximately \$15,000 per day. It is hardly good stewardship in tough financial times to waste money by holding a pointless special session. With no additional resources, there isn’t any point in continuing to struggle over the budget.

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