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## The Cauthorn Report

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Senator John Cauthorn and his Senate colleagues this week approved a final \$18.8 billion budget plan funding virtually all the services the state provides for Missourians in the fiscal year beginning July 1.

“We got the budget done ahead of schedule this year,” Cauthorn said. “More importantly, without increased taxes, we’re providing schools with more money than the governor’s tirelessly flogged spending plan that was propped up by a number of business and income tax hikes.”

“Legislators have put the walk behind the talk that says education is a top priority,” Cauthorn said. “What the governor’s priorities are remains anyone’s guess.”

The final education budget sent to the governor increased the funding for the Foundation Formula by over \$100 million dollars (5.12% in crease over last year, \$6 million more than the Governor’s recommendation). We also increased funding for educational categoricals such as transportation, early childhood special education, gifted programs, Career Ladder, and the Parents as Teachers Program. We also increased Higher education funding by more than \$24 million.

“We also managed to help Missouri farmers by funding the ethanol incentive fund by providing \$6.3 million to support continued efforts for Missouri farmers to produce alternative fuel,” said. Cauthorn. “I am especially proud that we continued to support our elderly. We increased funding for Missouri’s Veteran Homes, fully funded the Missouri Senior RX program and fully funded the Governor’s request for elderly and handicapped transportation (grants to locals such as OATS) and we managed to do all of these things without a tax increase.”

Cauthorn, working with the Missouri Sportsmen’s Caucus, this week secured approval of a request to the Conservation Commission to reissue no-cost equivalent permit privileges to military personnel, including Missouri National Guardsmen and Reservists, who purchased hunting, fishing or trapping permits but were unable to fully exercise the privileges due to mobilization or deployment outside of Missouri.

“Missouri sportsmen and women unable to use their permits due to obligations as military men and women deserve, at the very least, to have their hunting, fishing and trapping privileges renewed without cost,” Cauthorn said. “It’s a sensible and fitting way of saying thanks to those who make great sacrifices for us here at home.”

Passed in both chambers and traveling to the governor’s desk is SB 1086, Senator Cauthorn’s legislation prohibiting mortgage lenders from forcing borrowers to buy homeowners’ insurance policies over and above the replacement value of the home’s contents and improvements.

“Holding a policy covering actual assessed valuation is smart business for homeowners and home lenders,” Cauthorn said. “But requiring coverage for more than a property’s value serves to keep many people from ever being able to buy a home at all.”

Also moving to the governor’s office is SB 992, Cauthorn’s measure changing the definition of approved anhydrous ammonia transport containers.

“Anhydrous ammonia is a staple of agriculture – unfortunately it’s a key ingredient in illegal meth production, too” Cauthorn said. “Regulating anhydrous handling so farmers can legally transport the chemical and so meth cooks can’t, will help curb the production of highly addictive and damaging drugs.”

Also before House and Senate negotiators is HB 1305, a bill making significant medical malpractice insurance reforms as half of an equation to holding premiums down, and retaining doctors in Missouri. The other legislative component, a measure reforming various aspects of Missouri’s civil liability, or tort laws (HB 1304) cleared the General Assembly last month and was delivered to the governor, who then vetoed the measure as he had a similar bill last year.

“The more I think about priorities, it seems that the campaign contributions of trial attorneys might top the governor’s list,” Cauthorn said. “Too bad for the rest of us scrambling to find a new doctor.”

A Senate panel this week approved HJR 39, a joint resolution that would amend Missouri’s constitution to specify that marriages only between a man and a woman be recognized by the state.

“This is not a marriage ban; this is a marriage protector,” Cauthorn said. “Placing the marriage recognition criteria in the constitution puts the institution beyond the reach of courts bent on legislating.”

Considering the strong legislative support, Cauthorn predicted the resolution would clear the General Assembly and go before voters in August or November of this year.

Having passed the budget and many other initiatives, Cauthorn and his colleagues have until 6:00 p.m. next Friday, May 14 to consider remaining bills. You can find Senator Cauthorn’s web page by going to the following address [www.senate.state.mo.us/cauthorn](http://www.senate.state.mo.us/cauthorn)