

# **CAPITOL REPORT**

## **Senator Luann Ridgeway**

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### **STRANGE LOGIC**

The more government spends—the more money we make. Does this make sense to anybody???

It doesn't make sense to me either, but there are some legislators that believe it's true. This is the best I can do to explain this strange logic. Let's say you are paying \$50 a month for satellite television, and you find you are \$20 short in your new monthly budget.

Most reasonable people would think you have three options:

1. Stop paying for satellite television.
2. Find another way to cut \$20 from your expenses each month.
3. Get another job and raise your income.

I believe most people would choose to stop paying for satellite television until their budget would allow this expense. Satellite provides great reception, but those ugly ol' rabbit ears are free.

There is another more creative (read liberal) option you might not have considered. We should keep satellite television because, get this, it results in a savings.

How? The theory goes like this. With satellite, you are more likely to stay home and watch television. You are more likely to learn something (especially if you watch public television or the Discovery Channel), which will improve your knowledge base, skills, which could lead to a pay increase which would result in more taxes going to the government so some (read legislators) could be more compassionate with your money than the previous administration and get re-elected. In fact, watching educational television is like vocational rehabilitation. Since you might stay home to watch TV, you will cook more food at home (which saves money versus eating out—which you probably would do if you hadn't been watching TV; plus staying at home reduces energy consumption). Also, you will save money on popcorn, cola, and movie tickets if you watch AMC movies on the satellite television. You can also use your Thigh-Master in your living room while you watch, thus improving your health and lowering your health care costs, thus saving everybody money.

So, satellite TV isn't a budget busting luxury. It is a cost-saving necessity that can positively affect your health, your job, and the national economy.

This reverse-logic is just how the Russian economy worked in the Soviet Union. You think I'm joking? Well, I'm not. I have personally spoken with Russian businessmen who managed businesses in the former USSR. The managers of state-run industries told me they could only make more money by adding more employees, because the more money it cost to produce a product, the more money they got from the state. Making more money by reducing expenses or becoming more efficient was a thought totally foreign to them. No wonder the Russian people were initially bewildered with a free market economy!

The difference is that the Russians learned and adapted. Liberals have not.

American liberals continue to believe that government can spend itself into prosperity. They refuse to cut anywhere. I became aware that the state owns a high speed Internet and video conferencing system called MOREnet because I am a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. MOREnet cost Missouri taxpayers nearly \$14 million last year. Missouri taxpayers also help support the Public Broadcasting Service and the National Public Radio corporations. Please remember it's been a big question this year as to whether we will be able to provide low income people with basic needs such as hearing aids, wheelchairs, oxygen, eyeglasses, eye exams, hospice care, prosthetics, catheters, canes, crutches, insulin, and therapeutic care for persons with developmental disabilities. It's hard to use the "balanced" spending argument to fund luxuries, and then deny these basic services to low income people.

The liberals say that MOREnet doesn't cost money. No sir, it saves! The liberal folks say that libraries and schools across Missouri would have to pay more money to MOREnet if we cut funding, because they would be "forced" to pick up the slack from their dedicated budgets. Liberals say this even though there are lower cost Internet and video conferencing services available in the free market. (I've been told that free high-speed Internet access is available to schools and libraries right now.) Liberals would say that not having a long distance learning resource available would cost us more money in the long run. Here's a good one, "Don't forget that all the state employees working for MOREnet would no longer be employed and thus they wouldn't be paying taxes (less taxes from the liberal perspective is always bad) and they wouldn't have health insurance so they might have to go on Medicaid/unemployment which costs the state money". (Never mind the fact that most reasonable people would simply go find another job, maybe even in the private sector.)

So, if we accept liberal logic, you may not be able to stay on your oxygen, but you can go to the library and stay on the Internet. You may not be able to go into hospice care, but you can use the televideo conferencing ability of MOREnet and complain to the entire state without leaving your local library. You may not get a hearing aid, but if you turn your radio up real loud, you can have a dandy evening listening to "The Prairie Home Companion" on NPR.

I'm not saying that MOREnet or the public broadcasting system is bad. I love listening to Garrison Keillor (even if he is a left-wing wacko). But it is simply not governments'

(read taxpayers') responsibility to provide these services. It belongs to the free market. It belongs to you and me as individuals. How can we justify spending your tax dollars on luxuries while at the same time risking delay or denial of needed medical equipment or preventative screenings and care to people who may no longer qualify under the new eligibility standards? This is a matter of priorities and basic philosophy.

This story ends with bad news and good news. The good news is that we stayed true to our pledge to not raise your taxes. The bad news is that we didn't stop paying for luxuries. Eliminating funding to any program is next to impossible in Jefferson City. This is why it's better to never start spending state money on new programs or services.

Reductions, or decreases in the increase are about all you can get. Public broadcasting asked for \$695,000 more, and got \$95,000 more for a total of \$195,000. Not a lot you might say, but that would buy quite a few eyeglasses, hearing aids or wheelchairs. I suggested that all the funding be cut. My view did not prevail. Funding to the state Internet system was reduced from \$14 to \$12 million. Like Truman said, "The buck stops here", and hard choices had to be made to balance the budget. We were able to scale back welfare spending to about what we spent in 2001. The streets did not run red due to the carnage of an uncaring Democrat controlled state in 2001 and neither will they with the passage of our Republican controlled 2006 budget (contrary to the dire predictions of the liberal left). Last year's budget was \$18.9 billion. The new budget totals \$19.2 billion. So we accomplished a decrease in the rate of increase.

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