

*“Nothing is politically right
which is morally wrong.”*
– Daniel O’Connell



*“Free and fair discussion will ever be
found the firmest friend of truth.”*
– George Campbell

MISSOURI SENATE

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Senator Stouffer on the Budget

How big is a billion dollars? As you read this report on how the state will spend \$19.2 billion next year, keep this in mind—how big is one billion?

- A billion seconds ago it was 1959.
- A billion minutes ago Jesus was alive.
- A billion hours ago our ancestors were living in the Stone Age.
- A billion dollars ago was only 8 hours and 20 minutes, at the rate the United States government spends it.

By constitution, the public debt must be taken care of before the rest of the budget. House Bill 1 will pay \$855 million towards the debt. After the debt is paid, 25 percent of the budget goes to education. Education will receive \$113 million, which will go into the new foundation formula, upon approval the conference committee. First Steps will be fully funded and Sheltered Workshops will see a reduction in services, because the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education predicted it would cost less to provide the same services.

In House Bill 3, different versions from the House and Senate has caused a lot of discussion for the higher education budget. The House is funding higher education at the same level as last year and the Senate reduced funding by five percent and grants by 10 percent. It is my hope that this does not have a negative impact on University Extension, which many constituents have been concerned about.

The Department of Revenue (DOR) and MoDot are in House Bill 4. DOR had the largest savings across the state with a reduction of 7.5 percent. MoDot received a five percent increase through Amendment 3. This increase made an additional \$12 million for new construction, \$45 million for maintenance projects, and \$800,000 for port projects. Also, Mo. Elderly and Handicapped Transportation Assistance increased by \$150,000.

House Bill 6 funds the Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Conservation. The Department of Agriculture's budget has some conflict. The House wants to increase ethanol subsidies by \$5 million and the Senate only wants to increase the subsidies by \$1.1 million. Again, the compromise made in the upcoming conference committee will make the final decision.

Department of Mental Health, Health and Senior Services, and Social Services fall under House Bill 10 and 11. This portion of the budget is where Senate Bill 539, Medicaid reform, will come into play. The House funded eligibility rates for seniors, disabled, and in-home health care at 80 percent of the poverty level and the Senate funded it at 85 percent. The governor's proposal was 74 percent. The Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will be funded at a percent that will be decided in conference.

House Bills No. 1 through 13 are dedicated to the budget. For the length of this article we have only highlighted the most important bills.

Our office is still providing constituents with information on how the Medicaid reform will affect their individual case. In addition, the Lt. Governor is giving out Senior Volunteers Awards. Applicants must be over 60 years of age and have volunteered for more than 40 hours in the past year. If you are interested, please contact our office.

If you have questions about the budget or any other issue or would like to receive this weekly report electronically, please feel free to contact my office by calling toll free 866-768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.