



Changing the Culture

Spending Your Tax Dollars Wisely

One of my top priorities as your State Senator is to oppose unnecessary taxes. The best way to accomplish this is by ensuring that the State of Missouri lives within its means. Like any business or organization, government must operate efficiently to attain its goals—in this case, serving the citizens of Missouri. The new leadership that took office this past January shares my goal of improving the efficacy of state government. The most prominent person in this new direction is Governor Matt Blunt, who upon taking office challenged the Missouri’s 16 executive departments to provide a better and more efficient use of state resources.

The Office of Administration (OA) is at the forefront of the state’s effort in becoming more efficient. OA’s function is to provide essential support services to state departments. Earlier in the year, OA’s Commissioner Mike Keathley, a Southeast Missouri native, decided to contract janitorial and security services with private companies for certain state offices in Kansas City, Springfield, St. Joseph and St. Louis. The move saved the state approximately \$1.6 million without sacrificing the quality of services offered. Commissioner Keathley also identified ways to get rid of wasteful staffing policies by reorganizing many outdated job structures and consolidating staffing. The streamlining did not reduce services to the taxpayers, but the cost-saving plan did wipe out duplicate services.

Another of the OA’s common-sense initiatives deals with leasing and utility payments. For many years, several state agencies rented office space and paid for utilities in buildings owned by private contractors. This would be fine if there were a lack of state-owned facilities, but there are in fact, ample vacant state-owned spaces throughout Missouri. New leadership has seen to it that these wasteful leasing contracts were discontinued and agencies move into state-owned space. The moves have already saved Missouri \$1.2 million, savings that will add up to millions more over time.

Both the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Corrections have implemented cost-saving spending initiatives. By agreeing not to purchase any new vehicles, other than emergency-response vehicles, DNR saved taxpayers more than \$1 million. On the operations side, DNR succeeded in

cutting the time it takes to process most permits in half, from 14 days to 7 days, and increased their use of golf carts in state parks to reduce wear and mileage on park vehicles. The Department of Corrections contributed to the waste-eradicating efforts by consolidating their inmate education services to save over \$1.4 million. The savings come from the Department's decision to close schools at three of the state's five maximum-security institutions. Education services at the state's 17 other correctional facilities will continue, with services prioritized to those inmates who will be out of prison the soonest. Education is a critical aspect of an inmate's rehabilitation as inmates released with an education are less likely to fall back into a life of crime. This responsible fiscal management plan saves taxpayer money while maintaining this important aspect of public safety.

To get a more in-depth view of the efficiency of state departments, Governor Blunt created the State Government Review Commission. It is routine for large businesses to restructure every 10 to 15 years, yet the State of Missouri's operating structure has remained untouched for three decades. The commission is in the process of outlining a strategy for creating a more efficient state government. One facet receiving attention is identifying ways to better assimilate technology to help the state do its job with fewer employees and fewer expenses. The 20-member panel will present its findings to the Governor and Legislature at the beginning of 2006. One fact that will illuminate the scope of the restructuring issue: the State of Illinois has roughly twice the population of Missouri, yet the Land of Lincoln has about the same number of state employees as the Show-Me State. This is an obvious lag in efficiency on Missouri's part and is what the commission will look to rectify.

Essentially, Missouri is going through a year-long spring cleaning. I will remain focused on giving Missourians the kind of efficient, effective, and responsible state government they expect and deserve. Simply put, taxpayers expect me to make sure that their hard-earned tax dollars are spent wisely—an expectation I will work to exceed. The hard work has just begun.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

Thank you for your time.

Senator Jason Crowell represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.