



Governor Delivers *State of the State*

Reforming Medicaid Boosts Education Dollars Without Raising Taxes

On Wednesday Governor Matt Blunt delivered his State-of-the-State address, which included his budget plan, to an evening joint session of the 93rd General Assembly.

Although many leading economic indicators project favorable revenue growth, estimates show a budget deficit of more than \$300 million for fiscal year 2006, due in part to one-time funding mechanisms used over the last two budget years. As Missouri's Constitution requires a balanced budget, and as voters have forcefully and rightly rejected statewide tax increases, it's clear that we must spend where our priorities lie.

Governor Blunt reiterated his objective of balancing the state budget and increasing school funding without raising taxes. My pledge has always been to public education and making sure that this is reflected in the state budget. If education is to be our state's number one priority, our state must fund education first and slow growth in other areas of the state budget such as our state's welfare Medicaid system. We must prevent growth in this area from impairing our ability to educate, protect and employ Missourians.

Nearly one in five Missourians receive welfare Medicaid benefits. This consumes more than a quarter of the state's \$19 billion budget. Missouri's welfare Medicaid system is one of the most liberal in the nation and it has grown far beyond the state's ability to afford it while maintaining our commitment to education. Medicaid is an important program that needs to be reformed while preserving benefits to those who are truly needy. For far too long we have measured compassion in Missouri by the number of souls we bind to our state's Medicaid welfare rolls, not by the quality and access to healthcare we offer the less affluent.

Governor Blunt's budget calls for more than \$170 million, a 4.7% increase, in added funding for public schools, funding that would be impossible without the welfare Medicaid reform. A strong education system is vital to the future of our state. We owe it to our children to commit ourselves to continue improving public education. As this session of the General Assembly begins, we set out to make public education our number one priority.

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 or you may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>. Bev Scheulen and Andrew Green are my staff in Jefferson City and are available to assist you with your constituent needs.

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.