



Week of January 24, 2005

## On the State of Our District

In the annual State of the State address on Wednesday, Governor Matt Blunt stressed his goal of balancing the state budget by cutting waste and fraud from government spending. This means our tax money will be used more wisely in worthy programs that directly affect us. The governor's address embraced the entire state of Missouri. I feel that an up-close look at the 29th Senatorial District is in order.

Southwest Missouri, being a rural region, prides itself on its stronghold in the agricultural industry. That hold needs to be strengthened, though. We have to make sure that our farm-produced goods are promoted locally and nationally.

In addition, our district has a specific asset that stands out from our neighboring southwest districts. We have tourism, which is an undeniable economic anchor for our district. As vice chairman of the Senate committee on Economic Development, Tourism and Local Government, I am personally involved with advancing legislation that positively affects the tourism sector of southwest Missouri. To keep a tight grip on our areas of strength, we need to attract more tourism and ag-based business ventures that mesh well with the profiles of our communities. We can never have enough jobs.

Our state is driven, both literally and figuratively, by the condition of our transportation system. Promises have been made statewide and at the local level to improve the roads to which we entrust our school buses, our cars and our lives. We've all felt our vehicles bump and swerve over potholes and uneven pavement. It's unsafe for us and hard on our cars. My seat on the Senate Transportation Committee will help me steer legislation to the Senate floor that aids

in the completion of the many projects that are on the Missouri Department of Transportation's agenda.

Southwest Missouri has had its share of problems with water quality. It's time that changes. Our thriving lakes and rivers should be clean and free from the threats to aquatic life, and in turn, our tourism draw. Pure water is in our future thanks to Gov. Blunt's appointment of former state Sen. Doyle Childers from Reeds Spring as the new head of Missouri's Department Natural Resources. What better way to voice our district's concerns with water quality than to have the man in charge be someone from our area? Even more to our district's advantage, former Sen. Childers has a history of common-sense involvement. I commend the governor for his selection.

Our district has many strengths. District-wide success is all about using the resources we have, and finding a way to procure the resources we need, to improve the quality of life for southwest Missourians. I'm optimistic about the condition our district is in because I know we have a solid base to work from and can overcome the challenges ahead.

Next week, I will give more detail of the governor's budget proposals.

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*Sen. Larry Gene Taylor represents the people of Ozark, Stone, Taney, Lawrence, Barry and McDonald counties.*