

# **Report from Senator David G. Klindt**

## *All the way from red to black*

We heard Gov. Matt Blunt deliver his second State of the State Address this week, and it was a great reminder of how far we've come as a state in just twelve months. We've traveled all the way from deep in the red to well in the black.

A year ago, we were facing a budget deficit of roughly a billion dollars. That's a lot of money – almost unmanageable for a state the size of Missouri. But thanks to the visionary leadership of Gov. Blunt and the courage of the General Assembly to fashion a budget that lives within our means, we are now looking at a small but very welcome budget surplus. What a turnaround in only a year!

The surplus is the first in five years. It means we'll be able to put together a budget this year that meets the state's needs and truly balances – without a tax increase. We must always remember that the dollars we collect and spend come from the wallets and purses of hard-working Missourians. Every dollar belongs first to the people.

Gov. Blunt's brilliant, visionary speech illuminates a clear path to a brighter future for Missouri. He has proposed to fully fund the new foundation formula this year with \$167 million in new money for our public schools. I certainly concur with this request. The first priority of the state is to deliver a world class education. Gov. Blunt clearly shares this commitment.

The higher education community, which was bracing for a round of budget cuts, is celebrating this week after hearing Gov. Blunt recommend a \$17 million increase – the biggest increase for higher education in five years.

I'm personally glad to see the governor is as committed as I am to advancing life sciences research and boosting our growing ethanol industry. The governor's budget includes \$38.5 million to boost life sciences research. Missouri has a tremendous opportunity to be the worldwide leader in life sciences and biotechnology.

Missouri is in the midst of a strong economic recovery. New jobs are being created at the rate of about 500 a week. Unemployment is the lowest it has been since before 9/11. Obviously, the steps we took to improve Missouri's economic climate are having a positive impact.

All the good arrows are pointing up: education funding is up, jobs are up, the economic climate is up. All the bad arrows are pointing down: meth incidents are down, government waste is down, and the size of the bureaucracy is down.

As Gov. Blunt so clearly stated, “the state of the state is strong.” With visionary leadership and the continued determination to do the right thing in Jefferson City, the state of the future is even stronger.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Paul G. Stitt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "P" and "S".