

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

## *January 26, 2006*

### *The train to the future is leaving the station. Are we on it?*

This week Governor Matt Blunt unveiled one of the most exciting ideas in Missouri's history – the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative. It has the potential to make Missouri a global leader in science and technology research and how we apply that research in a way that maximizes job creation.

The Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative will transform the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) into a public-private partnership. As a result, the state will reap a one-time infusion of approximately \$400 million. MOHELA was created by the Missouri General Assembly a quarter century ago to buy college loans from Missouri banks. Under the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative, student loan holders and institutions will receive equal or improved service.

The state will put this important asset to work by directly investing \$300 million in higher education capital improvement projects linked to science and technology research. By leveraging matching funds, the total immediate investment in higher education will exceed \$500 million. The rest of the money will be used to provide scholarships for students, create jobs through the commercial application of groundbreaking research, and attract the best and brightest professors to our public universities.

And here's a major part of the excitement: it's estimated the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative will create nearly 5,000 high-wage jobs in Missouri each year. Many of those jobs will take root in Northwest Missouri.

One of the projects to directly benefit from the Initiative is the Center for Plant Biologics at Northwest Missouri State University in Maryville.

Other states have created similar public-private partnerships, but none of them are as visionary or as bold as the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative. Governor Blunt and his staff are to be congratulated for their hard work in moving Missouri forward.

The unveiling of the Initiative has generated several questions, but the most important question is this one: Are we going to be on board the train to the future as it rolls out of the station, or will we timidly stand on the platform and wave bye-bye? To me the answer is obvious – all aboard!

Also this week, the Senate Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on one of my top legislative priorities. SB 744 permanently removes the sales tax on farm fuel. Currently, farmers pay sales tax on fuel they use strictly on the farm. Since the fuel is technically an input cost to creating a final product, the farmers should not owe this tax.

Enacting SB 744 into law will collectively save Missouri farmers about \$160,000 a year and make the process of filling up the combine every morning during harvest season a little less painful.

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