



Gibbons Capitol Report
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A Strong Footing for Decades to Come

Anyone who has ever built a home knows the most critical step is building a solid foundation. If it is done well, the home constructed will be safe, secure and provide great comfort to many generations. In the Missouri Senate, we have proven that we can find common sense solutions to complex problems. But, we have no time to waste as we continue building a strong foundation for the 21st century.

Last year was a historic session. Missourians are seeing changes that make our lives better, from schools, to work, to a day in court. More Missourians are at work, businesses are choosing Missouri as a place to grow and invest over other states, even over other countries. Our children have a better chance at a great education, and we are safer. We found the right balance and Missouri is a now safer place to live and raise a family.

Chief among our priorities this year is to make healthcare available and affordable to all; to protect our rights in our homes, farms, and businesses; to safeguard our children; and to establish an energy action plan.

We will continue the effort to reform our healthcare system. The Medicaid Reform Commission recently issued its report and I encourage you to read the commission's healthcare goals online at www.senate.mo.gov/medicaidreform.

We must also place an emphasis on technology. The Institute of Medicine says between 44,000 and 98,000 people die each year because of errors in paper medical records. It is unacceptable in the 21st century that Jiffy Lube is more technologically advanced than our healthcare system. Paper kills and we must move to a system where electronic medical records and e-prescribing are common place.

In addition to the reforms listed by the commission, we must change the law where necessary to eliminate fraud, waste and abuse. The Special Senate Committee on Fraud that I appointed will meet later this month, so that we can expose any fraud in the system and take action to eliminate it.

We must also act this year to protect the homes, farms, and businesses of the people of this state from the abuses of eminent domain and redevelopment tools like Tax Increment Financing or "TIF." The awesome power of government to take someone's property with

just compensation is, at times, necessary to provide for a truly public use and benefit. But, the taxpayer subsidized financial success of one property owner at the expense of another is not a public benefit that allows the government to take someone's home.

Our children deserve our attention again this year. Last year, we dedicated more money than ever to our children's education to be distributed by a new formula based upon students' needs rather than local wealth. Missouri will become a leader in protecting her children by increasing penalties for sexual offenders who prey on them, creating a child safe internet and requiring background checks for employees who work with children. Any sexual predator who might consider harming a child must know, that the punishment will be swift, certain, and severe. Or to put it another way, we are going to lock the door and throw away the key.

We have a serious problem with the rising costs of energy. Missouri should strive to be a leader in America with an energy plan that utilizes our agricultural strengths to pursue renewable fuels, cleaner burning technologies, and aggressively pursue hydrogen as a primary fuel source, so that we can be energy independent, and protect the environment.

These goals will not be easy to achieve as we continue to debate the great and difficult issues of our time. Because this is an election year, each senator must work extra hard to have the clash of ideas essential to a robust democracy without the personal attacks or rabid partisanship that is so destructive to our quest; that is, to do what is right, to the best of our ability, for the people of this great state.

These goals joined with the work accomplished during the 2005 legislative session will put the people of Missouri on a strong footing for decades to come.