



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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# Rural Lawmakers Move to Stop Tax Giveaways for Stadiums

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JEFFERSON CITY – State Sen. Frank Barnitz, D- Lake Spring, and state Rep. Wes Shoemyer, D-Clarence, will be sponsoring legislation to prevent the Blunt administration from providing \$50 million in tax breaks to the Kansas City Chiefs and Royals without legislative approval.

Due to strong bipartisan opposition to public funding for professional sports stadiums, the Missouri General Assembly in recent years has blocked several attempts to earmark taxpayer money for renovations at the Truman Sports Complex, which is home to the Chiefs and Royals. However, The Kansas City Star reported last month that Republican Gov. Matt Blunt and his Department of Economic Development have signed off on a plan to eliminate the Legislature from the debate by issuing the teams tax credits.

The newspaper quotes the governor’s spokeswoman as saying giving tax breaks to professional sports teams is “a reasonable proposal.” Shoemyer, D-Clarence, said the plan is unreasonable, especially given the state’s current financial condition.

“Billionaire owners of professional sports teams don’t need corporate welfare,” Shoemyer said. “Gov. Blunt is wrong to bypass the Legislature and give away \$50 million that would be better spent improving public education and access to health care. Missourians are more concerned with filling their lunch boxes than filling luxury boxes.”

Instead of legislative approval, Blunt’s proposal simply would require endorsement by the Missouri Development Finance Board, which is authorized to give tax breaks to businesses. Eight of the board’s 12 members are Republicans.

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Legislation by Barnitz and Shoemyer would strip the board of its power to grant tax breaks for professional sports stadiums, ensuring that such decisions are made by elected lawmakers instead of political appointees.

“The governor’s proposal shows his disregard for elected officials as well as Missourians’ priorities,” said Barnitz, D-Lake Spring. “The people and elected representatives have repeatedly said funding stadiums is not a priority or responsibility of state government.”

Barnitz said the stadium proposal is yet another example of the problems with how tax credits are issued. There is little legislative oversight and often no evidence that the lost revenue will result in any economic return for the state.

“Tax credits are a large part of why the state’s finances are in their present condition,” Barnitz said.

Although the governor recently traveled the state touting various projects, Shoemyer noted Blunt has been virtually silent about his support of tax giveaways for stadiums.

“The governor has never mentioned sports stadiums during his visits to rural Missouri,” Shoemyer said. “He apparently was trying to sneak through his stadium plan knowing the overwhelmingly negative reaction he would receive throughout the state once the public found out.”

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