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Democrats Oppose \$4,000 Pay Raises to Gov. Blunt's Cabinet, Propose \$1,600 Raise for All State Employees

JEFFERSON CITY – State Sen. Joan Bray, D-St. Louis County, and Sen. Frank Barnitz, D-Lake Spring, announced today that Missouri Democrats will oppose Republican Gov. Matt Blunt's plan to give \$4,000 pay raises to some highly paid state employees while mental health workers get pay increases of less than \$900. Instead, Democrats will propose giving all state employees an across-the-board \$1,600 pay raise during the next fiscal year.

Under Blunt's pay-raise plan, the director of social services, who makes \$103,224, would receive a \$4,129 raise. Meanwhile, mental health behavioral technicians, whose base salary is \$21,564, would receive only an \$863 raise. Under the Democratic pay-raise plan, all state employees would receive a \$1,600 raise.

"Gov. Blunt's proposal gives huge raises to those state employees who need them the least and miniscule raises to those who need them the most," said Bray, who sits on the Senate Appropriations Committee. "Missouri isn't last in the nation in state-employee pay because of what we pay our cabinet officials, we are last because of what we pay our mental-health and foster-care workers. Sadly, this is yet another example of Gov. Matt Blunt rewarding his friends and political donors at the expense of the majority of hard-working Missourians."

Both pay-raise plans would cost the same amount, and both would give additional increases to 5,900 law-enforcement officers with the Water Patrol, Liquor Control, Capitol Police and Department of Corrections, as well as fire inspectors, park rangers and 1,000 nurses. Both plans would also exclude elected officials and judges from the pay raises.

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“The state employees who deserve this raise the most are the ones who are directly delivering services every day to Missourians across the state,” Barnitz said. “Unfortunately, Gov. Blunt’s proposal shortchanges these hard-working Missourians while benefiting Jefferson City bureaucrats. Giving all state employees the same \$1,600 pay raise is the only responsible thing to do.”

Democrats are optimistic that Gov. Blunt will see the wisdom and fairness in the Democratic pay-raise plan, noting a previous statement he made about school salaries.

“It is wrong to give teachers a \$1 raise when the highest-paid employees are getting \$3. It is not wise. It is not fair. It is wrong,” said Gov. Blunt in his Nov. 28, 2005, weekly column.

Rep. Judy Baker, D-Columbia, will spearhead the Democratic pay-raise plan in the Missouri House of Representatives.

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