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Promises Made, Promises Kept Part II

Setting the 2006 Legislative Stage for Success

On Jan. 4, state lawmakers returned to the Capitol to convene the Second Regular Session of the General Assembly. Our priorities this session will mesh with the successes of last year's session and provide a more solid foundation for Missouri.

Access to Affordable, Quality Health Care

This session is pivotal in establishing an efficient, effective and quality health-care system for all Missourians. We will further improve the process of eligibility verification for taxpayer funded healthcare, focus on preventative care and increase access to quality medical care using the most advanced technology. We will pass legislation allowing for the creation of association health plans so individual Missourians and small businesses can come together and purchase health insurance at a volume discount. In addition, a Special Committee to Investigate Medicaid Fraud, of which I am a member, was created in the Missouri Senate. We will continue our work on this committee to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse.



Abundant Affordable Energy

The rising price of gasoline and natural gas is unacceptable. One solution to high gasoline prices is alternative fuels such as ethanol and biodiesel. Technological advancements enable corn to be converted into ethanol, which can be used in gas engines, and soybeans can be converted into biodiesel, which can be used in diesel engines. By shifting the supply for our fuel consumption to a source that is renewable and less costly, we can reduce our reliance on foreign oil, and benefit our state's agriculture industry. To this end, we will pass ethanol legislation that provides for a 10 percent ethanol standard in each gallon of gasoline sold in Missouri.

We all know that heating costs have increased significantly. Being able to heat your home is not a luxury, but a necessity here in Southeast Missouri. We will provide energy assistance by taking \$6.1 million in extra taxes collected from higher gas prices to fund the state's Utilicare program, which provides heating assistance to the elderly, disabled and low-income families during the Winter season.

Private Property Protection

Eminent domain laws exist to help the public, not hurt it. But the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that local

governments can seize homes and other private property and give it to private developers to build strip malls and office complexes in the name of overall economic development. This judgment has instilled fear in private property owners because their rights are being trampled by private development projects. We will address this through legislation that will protect the rights of property owners and ensure that farm, home and business owners are not victimized by unfair and unethical land seizures.

Missouri's Future

After rewriting the public school funding formula last year so that our schools are funded based on student need, Missouri has one of the most equitable school funding systems in the nation. Adding \$113 million last year, we will provide an additional \$137 million this year to fully fund the formula for the first time in five years.

It is increasingly clear that sexual predators are a constant threat to our children. We will not tolerate violent criminals that rape and molest our sons and daughters. We will impose a 25-year mandatory minimum sentence, as well as lifetime electronic tracking of released offenders. We will lock these vile criminals up and throw away the key!

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com> and <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

Senator Jason Crowell proudly represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.