

# CROWELL CONNECTION

DISTRICT 27

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## New Day Dawns on Missouri

*Prudent Decisions, New Direction Puts State on Path to Bright Future*

Just over a year ago, the state of Missouri was at a crossroads. The bloated government, out-of-control spending, and anemic economy that ruled the night of previous administrations was met head on with new, ready and willing leadership filled with fresh ideas. One year later, night has begun to give way to day, and we find ourselves in new territory. In just one year, a \$1.1-billion deficit has turned into a budget surplus - the first surplus in five years. In part, to get to this point, my colleagues and I made the difficult decision to stem the unmanageable growth of the state's health-care welfare system, Medicaid. If we had done nothing, today it would cost taxpayers an additional \$935 million to fund the program. We would be back in the darkness of night, facing yet another budget shortfall. The prudent decisions we made in 2005 have placed the state on a new path.

Our top priority is ensuring that our children receive a first-class education. In his state of the state address, Governor Blunt echoed the Legislature's call to fully fund the foundation formula for the first time in five years by adding an additional \$167 million. We added \$158 million last year, which means over the past two years, we have provided \$325 million in new money to education. We also expect to add \$1.8 million to the state's A+ Program, which enables Missouri's young people to attend community colleges. Last year we added \$1 million towards the Parents as Teachers program, which shows parents how to be their child's best "first" teacher, and this year, the organization will see a similar increase. To improve the quality of education and prevent tuition increases at our state colleges and universities, the Legislature is favorably considering a 2-percent increase in state funding for public two- and four-year colleges and universities. This would result in a \$902,000 increase for Southeast Missouri State University.

We must continue to make progress in reforming our state's healthcare welfare system, Medicaid. To sustain the current system, the state will have to add \$275 million in new money this year. The Medicaid program will consume 29 percent of the total budget as it provides healthcare for 16 percent of Missourians.

**“For those who continue to clamor for a return to the old way I ask you be candid. Be honest with the people of Missouri and tell them what programs you would cut or what taxes you would raise.”**

**-Governor Matt Blunt  
State of the State Address  
Jan. 11, 2006**

We must continue to weed out waste, fraud and abuse on both the recipient and provider side to bring costs down. We will create a Health-Care Technology Fund to promote a restructured and technologically advanced Medicaid program. Missourians should receive medical care that reflects the technological capabilities of this day and age.

Additionally, we will introduce health-care reforms to drive down costs and ensure that all Missourians have access to affordable healthcare. One way I advocate doing this is through the creation of Association Health Plans. This will enable small businesses and the self-employed to band together to increase their bargaining power in attaining health insurance.

We also must provide assistance to those who are having trouble paying their high heating bills. We are advocating for the immediate dedication of \$6.1 million to the state's Utilicare program to provide heating assistance to the elderly, disabled and low-income families.

These are just a few of the initiatives that this new day will bring. I will continue to work to make sure the dark nights of previous administrations are not seen again. I look forward to working with my fellow lawmakers and Governor Blunt to guarantee that the State of the State remains healthy and on the path to a bright future.

### **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](mailto: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.*