



Office of
Jason Crowell State Senator
The Crowell Connection

Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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Working for You in Jefferson City

The last day of the 2007 Legislative Session is May 18, which will conclude another successful session in the Missouri Senate. This year, we were able to end the state income tax on retirement benefits, provide for our veterans, and increase Missouri students' access to a world class education.

Ending State Income Tax on Retirement Benefits

We ended this session the unfair state income tax on retirement benefits. This was done through the passage of House Bill 444, which phases out the state income tax on Social Security benefits, Social Security disability, and non-private Social Security exempt retirement benefits.

The exemptions begin at 20 percent for the 2007 tax year, eventually becoming a complete 100 percent exemption by the 2012 tax year.

Qualifying non-private retirement benefits include those for firemen and police officers, railroad workers, teachers, as well as veterans and certain federal employees. These pensions will be exempt from state income taxes up to the

maximum Social Security benefit (currently \$32,500). Seniors 62 or over and all disabled residents will be eligible for the exemption. An income threshold of \$85,000 for an individual or \$100,000 for a couple applies.



Fully Funding Missouri Veteran's Homes

We celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Missouri Veterans Commission, an important organization that helps veterans in this state access their benefits. One such benefit is access to one of Missouri's seven veteran's homes, which provide skilled long term and skilled nursing care. Prior to this year 14 percent of beds in these homes remained available. More than 1,000 veterans were on the waiting list to get in; the Cape Girardeau facility's waiting list alone was nearly 300 names. This year, the state budget increased funding for veteran's homes by \$2.8 million adding 150 new beds allowing for maximum capacity.

School Funding by District

We made funding education our number one priority again this year by adding \$132.6 million to the K-12 education budget statewide. Below you can find funding increases for every school district in the 27th Senatorial District.

SCHOOL	FY '05 State Funding	FY '06 State Funding	FY '07 State Funding	FY '08 State Funding	FY '08 Increase	% Increase
Meadow Heights	\$1,752,648	\$1,670,807	\$1,788,469	\$1,904,287	\$115,818	6.48%
Leopold	\$704,058	\$749,454	\$849,587	\$884,722	\$35,135	4.14%
Zalma	\$898,834	\$872,745	\$982,650	\$1,015,462	\$32,812	3.34%
Woodland	\$2,648,709	\$2,726,409	\$2,950,289	\$3,161,834	\$211,545	7.17%
Jackson	\$9,411,482	\$10,993,743	\$11,597,221	\$12,186,022	\$588,801	5.08%
Delta	\$1,153,821	\$1,144,548	\$1,301,462	\$1,351,828	\$50,366	3.87%
Oak Ridge	\$1,003,434	\$1,358,244	\$1,393,309	\$1,427,729	\$34,420	2.47%
Cape Girardeau	\$5,168,911	\$5,414,119	\$5,894,710	\$6,289,110	\$394,400	6.69%
Nell Holcomb	\$778,382	\$804,080	\$878,840	\$996,097	\$117,257	13.34%
Marquand-Zion	\$642,512	\$767,685	\$886,585	\$899,522	\$12,937	1.46%
Fredericktown	\$5,756,441	\$5,630,644	\$5,853,920	\$6,082,947	\$229,027	3.91%
East Prairie	\$3,086,950	\$3,309,335	\$3,539,993	\$3,849,443	\$309,450	8.74%
Charleston	\$3,533,141	\$3,583,304	\$3,816,362	\$4,053,953	\$237,591	6.23%
Perry County	\$3,330,143	\$3,363,671	\$3,585,464	\$3,888,921	\$303,457	8.46%
Altenburg	\$202,459	\$225,293	\$286,221	\$293,248	\$7,027	2.46%
Scott City R-I	\$2,646,224	\$2,681,293	\$2,913,582	\$3,152,839	\$239,257	8.21%
Scott County R-II	\$1,745,724	\$1,643,161	\$1,783,839	\$1,930,407	\$146,568	8.22%
Scott County R-IV	\$2,909,856	\$3,058,318	\$3,239,982	\$3,415,057	\$175,075	5.40%
Scott County Central	\$1,471,635	\$1,569,162	\$1,614,730	\$1,65,951	\$45,221	2.80%
Sikeston	\$11,046,167	\$11,173,827	\$11,786,113	\$12,354,621	\$568,508	4.82%
Kelso	\$286,928	\$267,731	\$344,700	\$369,870	\$25,170	7.30%
Oran	\$1,211,957	\$1,243,390	\$1,292,542	\$1,356,342	\$63,800	4.94%
TOTALS	\$61,390,416	\$64,250,963	\$68,580,570	\$72,524,212	\$11,133,796	5.75% (avg.)

Reforming Higher Education

Senate Bill 389 combined two existing scholarships to create the *Access Missouri Scholarship*, a needs-based scholarship program, investing from \$25 million to nearly \$75 million our state commitment to helping student's access higher education. This funding will increase the number of student scholarships at Southeast Missouri State University from 300 to 1900.



Another scholarship opportunity comes from increased funding for the merit-based *Bright Flight* scholarship program. Starting in 2011 these scholarships will increase from \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually. Also included in this bill is \$350 million to go towards campus construction projects including over \$24.5 million in projects at Southeast Missouri State University. In another effort to keep college affordable, the bill includes a measure restraining tuition increases to the Consumer Price Index. Beginning in the 2008-2009 school year, if a university increases tuition at a rate greater than inflation, the state's

Coordinating Board for Higher Education could fine the institution up to 5 percent of their state appropriation.

Making a Difference: Autism Funding

There are more than 32,000 Missourians who have been diagnosed with autism, and the number of children and families affected by the disorder continues to grow. The fight against autism can be won with treatment, research, and education. Great strides have been made in the field of autism and increased state funding allows for that progress to continue. This year's state budget includes \$3.9 million to go towards autism funding. This funding will benefit the Tailor Institute, a nonprofit organization in Cape Girardeau specializing in working with those that are high functioning autistic and \$2.638 million will be allocated for a new autism center on Southeast Missouri State University's campus. The facility will provide diagnosis, treatment,



education, and resources for autism patients. Completion is planned for summer 2008.

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>.

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