



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Senate Approves \$21.4 Billion State Operating Budget

JEFFERSON CITY – Approving funding to run critical functions of state government with an emphasis on improving education, the Missouri Senate this week approved thirteen budget bills totaling \$21.4 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include a \$132 million increase for the school foundation formula, as well as an additional \$15 million increase to fund the Small Schools Grant program. Universities and community colleges received increases of between 4 and 5 percent, marking the second consecutive year for higher education increases.

The General Assembly has continued its commitment to fully fund a new school funding formula that gives every child, no matter where they live, an equal opportunity for a great education. This year we met that commitment by dedicating an additional \$147 million dollars to meet the phase-in schedule, plus we were able to invest in helping more Missouri students attend colleges and universities by greatly expanding scholarships and higher education funding.

Healthcare spending also saw large increases with more than \$150 million dedicated to cover the growth in Medicaid. \$13.4 million will go to the Ticket to Work program that provides Medicaid to disabled employees who would like to work, but risk losing their Medicaid benefits by doing so. \$7.5 million is dedicated to improve Missouri's delivery of healthcare with the use of electronic medical records.

The budget also increases spending for several health programs including \$3.9 million for autism, \$960,000 for the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Program, and \$219,000 for four additional senior nutrition centers across the state.

Women and children also benefit from the budget with \$500,000 dedicated to cover the costs of forensic rape exams that rape victims are many times required to foot the bill for, another \$500,000 for the Show-Me Healthy Women program, and an increase totaling \$3.8 million in payments to foster care parents.

Senators and House members will now meet and work out any differences in the bills. Once negotiated and approved by the conference committee, the measures will go back to the House for a vote where they originated. Once adopted by the House, the bills will need Senate approval before moving to the governor.

The budget must pass by 6 p.m., Friday, May 11, as required by the constitution.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.