



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



Room 423 - State Capitol Bldg. - Jefferson City, MO 65101 – Contact Barbara Mustoe Phone: (573) 751-2306

Week of Dec. 3, 2007

A Week for Public Input

This week, the Senate Appropriations Committee held public hearings to gather testimony from citizens on the way in which the programs Missourians use are funded. This process is obviously important to the people of Missouri, and we approach our preparation and planning with the utmost care. The budget is made of billions of dollars of taxpayer money, and we do our best to invest those dollars wisely.

This year, a record number of 67 witnesses from all over the state testified about the various ways that the state can meet Missouri's most critical needs. Representatives spoke about public safety, health and senior services, corrections, higher education, elementary and secondary education, and social services. The most testimony came from the 31 citizens who spoke about mental health—a subject that covers issues such as substance abuse treatment, developmental disorders, and autism. I would like to share some of the information these individuals provided for the committee.

- Ladell Flowers traveled to Jefferson City from Kansas City. Mr. Flowers is the executive director of Dismas House of Kansas City, Inc. as well as an assistant pastor. He spoke in order to highlight the good that faith-based organizations can do in their communities. Dismas House is an outpatient substance abuse treatment center that helps previously incarcerated individuals re-enter society. He asked the state to continue to support faith-based programs through grants that enhance the programs' outreach.
- Nikki Straw is a constituent of the 32nd district, who traveled on behalf of a friend. Unfortunately, Bobbi Moseley was unable to attend and speak about her daughter, who has Asperger's Syndrome as well as bipolar disorder. Ms. Straw made the drive from Joplin on behalf of her friend to thank us for increasing funding for autism programs. In the Fiscal Year 2008 budget, there is \$3.9 million allocated for autism research and treatment.

- Some very interesting testimony came from David Helling, a Columbia resident. He is a licensed clinical social worker who helps others who suffer with substance abuse. Mr. Helling chose this field after fighting his own rough battle with addiction. He asked for the committee to consider the high cost of substance abuse treatment and to continue to support organizations that help recovering addicts.
- Cathy Enfield came to Jefferson City with her mother from Independence to represent People First of Missouri. Since Ms. Enfield was developmentally disabled herself, the testimony was especially poignant. She spoke in support of funding programs that focus on allowing those with disabilities to be a part of the community.

I would like to personally offer my thanks to every person that testified over the two-day period. As chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I can assure you that we are taking everything that was said into consideration as we continue the planning process. In contrast to the past, we held public hearings earlier in the year, which allows the committee to better focus on the issues being discussed. Creating a budget is a daunting responsibility, but the testimony we heard this week will help us craft a fiscally responsible spending plan that serves Missouri's most critical needs.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper,
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*