



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of August 20, 2007

Back for a Special Session

During the regular legislative session that takes place every January through May, my colleagues and I work to complete priorities that will benefit this state. Occasionally, the governor feels that there are additional pieces of legislation that need to be dealt with outside of the regular session causing him to call a special session. This week, I returned to Jefferson City to begin work on two issues.

Over the past several years, economic development has become a focus of the legislature, and the results have been encouraging. The unemployment rate in the state is the lowest it has been in the past six years and the number of new jobs created since January 2005 has climbed to 94,300. During the regular session, the General Assembly passed House Bill 327, and omnibus economic development package. The legislation included tax credits to aid and encourage Missouri businesses. One particularly important incentive increase would go to the Quality Jobs program, which rewards businesses for providing jobs with pay above the county's average wage and that provide sufficient healthcare coverage. This bill's goal was noble—to increase the number of businesses coming to the state and to make sure there are good paying jobs for Missourians.

House Bill 327, however, became weighted down with too many projects with a possible price tag of approximately \$200 million. The governor chose to veto the bill because of the cost, but called us into a special session so that the legislature could have a chance to create a bill that will be both fiscally responsible and will continue to advance the state's thriving economy.

Another issue that the legislature will be dealing with during the special session has to do with the safety of Missouri's bridges. Even before the tragic bridge collapse in Minnesota, the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) had been working to implement an innovative repair program to make sure Missouri's infrastructure stays solid. The Safe and Sound bridge program plans to repair or replace 800 bridges in the state and then maintain them for 25 years after work is complete. MoDOT has chosen to work with only one team of contractors who will be responsible for the costs and maintenance of the work

up front. The state will pay back the costs over time, but state bonding requirements don't fit with the plan. We are working to change the bonding laws for the project so that the state's interests will be protected and the project can begin.

As with legislation that we deal with, the work that we are doing during this special session will improve our state. Whether the goal is to make sure our bridges are safe to cross or to encourage economic growth, I will continue to serve as your voice here in Jefferson City.

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