



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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**Week of April 9, 2007**

## Keeping Education a Priority *Budgeting for Higher Education*

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One of my duties in the Senate is serving as vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, which is responsible for the state budget. This role gives me the opportunity to make an important difference in the lives of Missourians and the residents of the 32<sup>nd</sup> District.

My colleagues and I received the state budget from the House in late March and we have been working hard since then to come up with the best use for Missouri's tax dollars. The deadline to complete the process is May 11, and the spending plan will take effect at the beginning of the 2008 fiscal year on July 1, 2007. As it stands, the \$21 billion budget provides for some valuable educational opportunities with a \$54.5 million boost in state funding to higher education.

This increase allows for several important projects for the colleges and universities in the 32<sup>nd</sup> District. Crowder College is a quickly expanding community college which is known throughout the nation for their Alternative Energy program. Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) in Joplin is an example of a facility of higher learning that focuses on the whole education of the student and offers programs that have received praise throughout the state. MSSU also recognizes that some students in Missouri are not able to make the trip to Joplin for classes and offers several distance education opportunities.

One exciting program is a collaborative effort being spearheaded by MSSU. This distance education opportunity allows students to earn an associate degree in dental hygiene. The program offers classes and correspondence through interactive television and the Internet, allowing more students to access this educational possibility. The future of dental hygienists is positive, with the American Dental Hygienists Association projecting a 37 percent growth rate in the field over a ten year period.

The state budget appropriates \$334,000 to go toward this specific program. It will truly be an asset to students throughout the state due to the fact that it is a collaborative effort that includes Rolla Technical

Center and Southeast Missouri State University. This is just one of several collaborative efforts expanding access to higher education in Missouri.

The work of the appropriations committee is one of the most important things that we do each session because it determines how the state will spend tax dollars over the next year. I am pleased to play a significant role in this process and will continue to make sure that key issues such as education are at the forefront of our efforts.

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