



Looking Back & Looking Ahead

JEFFERSON CITY — The end of the year is often a time of reflection on the events of the past 12 months followed by much anticipation and hope for the New Year. We know that each year brings new challenges and successes. In Missouri — and across the nation — we are all closely watching what the economy will do in the immediate months and year ahead while also looking forward to the positive events and experiences that 2009 may bring.

As I reflect on 2008, I am very pleased that the General Assembly passed a number of meaningful pieces of legislation designed to improve the lives of Missouri citizens. Among them were major property tax reforms, new measures to fight illegal immigration, a commitment to enhanced autism healthcare services, new laws regarding online harassment, and more protections to guard children from Internet predators and child pornographers. In all, lawmakers passed 100-plus bills, WITHOUT implementing tax increases and while directing more money to higher education — one of our state's top priorities — from a conservatively crafted and balanced budget.

It was during the months following the legislative session — when our attention turned to statewide elections and the national presidential election — that the nation began to learn the full extent of our country's economic downturn. Thankfully, Missouri is poised to weather the economic downturn better than most states because of planned surpluses and savings, but we will also face tough decisions regarding our state spending in 2009 and beyond. As I said in last week's column, I believe Missouri will hold up to the challenges and hopefully the situation will turn around before too long.

As you will well remember, this year also brought about unwelcome news from Mother Nature, who wreaked havoc all over the state with tornadoes, storms and flooding. St. Charles and Lincoln counties were among those particularly hard-hit by the spring and summer storms, and I'll never forget my tour of the Mississippi River with the governor and the national director of Homeland Security in June when we witnessed some unbelievable scenes of flood damage. As

you recall, some communities in Lincoln County were virtually underwater for days, and both counties were declared state and federal disaster areas and became eligible for disaster assistance. I do want to once again commend our state government and related agencies for their quick response to the crisis. I also want to again thank all of the state, local and volunteer agencies and businesses that pulled together to provide relief during those harrowing days. I know our area will be stronger and better for the experience.

As the new year fast approaches, I am very pleased to be returning to Jefferson City on Jan. 7 to once again represent your interests and needs. As always, I will continue to welcome and seek your input. Constituents may contact my office by phone at (866) 271-2844. I also invite you to contact one of my district coordinators: Beverly Steiniger in Lincoln County, who can be reached at (314) 229-3876, or Matthew Lindewirth in St. Charles County, who can be reached at (636) 345-0911. They can also be reached at beverly.steiniger@senate.mo.gov and matt.lindewirth@senate.mo.gov, respectively.

Your input and views on state matters are always at the heart of the legislative process and all state business. A good example was the recent widespread public input regarding changes to the structure and pricing of hunting, fishing and trapping permits proposed by the commission that governs the state's conservation department. The commission listened to public comment opposing many of the changes and then [declined to move forward with them](#) — effectively demonstrating your important role in the process.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you in 2008, and I look forward to working with you again in the New Year. All the best to you and yours for 2009 and beyond.

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