



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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Wrong Time for Raising Elected Officials' Pay

At a time when people are worrying about keeping their jobs, a salary boost for legislators and other elected officials should be the last thing anyone is considering. And yet, a pay increase for legislators is scheduled to become law next month (with raises starting January 2011)—thanks to the recommendation of a commission charged with studying elected officials' salaries.

As the General Assembly prepares to dramatically reduce spending and take the budget axe to many state programs, it would be a poor gesture to raise the salaries of elected officials. With funding very likely to be cut from a variety of programs and services that Missourians depend on—not just for fiscal year 2010 (beginning July 1, 2009), but for this current fiscal year—it is exceptionally bad timing to be talking about more money for legislators, especially as some Missourians are struggling to make ends meet in this slumping economy.

I plan to file a resolution in the next few days that would prevent these pay raises from going into effect. Under the Missouri Constitution, the proposed raise must be voted down by a two-thirds majority of both the House of Representatives and the Senate by the end of January or it will automatically kick in. The Legislature convenes in Jefferson City early next month so the clock is already ticking and there won't be much time to prevent this raise from taking effect.

We cannot predict how long the current economic downturn will last. But one thing

is for sure: It is time for legislators, who will soon be swinging the budget axe, to set an example for the rest of the state by declining the pay increase proposed by the Missouri Citizens' Commission on Compensation.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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