



Gibbons Capitol Report
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Advancing a Budget that Protects Taxpayers

As we approach the end of the legislative session, it is important that we remain committed to the goals we set back in January. This week, the Legislature advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$22.4 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The 2009 budget will show positive results in education, mental health services, and programs benefiting our veterans and children.

Expanding Education Opportunities

We want all our children, no matter where they live, to have an equal opportunity for a world class education. That is why we fully funded the next installment of the school foundation formula: a \$121 million increase. We also want to make it more affordable for more students to attend college in Missouri. We added an additional \$3.5 million to pay for more eligible students to take part in the A+ Schools Program. The program covers full tuition for the first two years of college for students who perform well in a participating high school. Missouri college students will have even more opportunities for needs-based scholarships, with an increase of \$48.7 million in the Access Missouri Scholarship Program, making more than \$100 million available for scholarships annually for Missouri students to attend public or private colleges and universities. Last year we went from 17,000 to more than 30,000 students receiving scholarships and we expect thousands more to benefit this year.

Caring for Our Veterans

Missouri veterans will benefit in the budget with \$2.2 million dedicated to the Serving Our Veterans Program for mental health services to family members of veterans and transitional house assistance for homeless veterans. We also allocated \$250,000 for a National Guard tuition assistance program, helping servicemen and women attend college at an affordable cost. Plus, we added nearly \$1 million to cover the inflationary costs of services in our veterans' homes.

Focus on Healthcare

Last year, the Legislature more than doubled funding for autism diagnosis and treatment, helping reduce the waitlist for services. This year, we approved a \$7.4 million increase for autism services to help empower families and those living with autism. We also funded MO HealthNet services including \$17 million for recipients to have health risk

assessments, healthcare advocates, and health improvement plans. We increased funding for prevention and healthcare services to an estimated 90,000 women who lack access to employer-provided health insurance and meet eligibility income levels. The services include Well Woman exams, breast and cervical cancer screenings, and pregnancy planning and counseling. We expanded coverage for children with pre-existing conditions in our State Children's Health Insurance Program. We also expanded presumptive eligibility for kids to include Rural Health Clinics and Federally Qualified Health Centers, rather than just children's hospitals. This way, children receive treatment first and the family's eligibility for MO HealthNet is determined second. We also increased funding for Children's Residential Treatment services and upped adoption and guardianship subsidies and payments to foster care parents.

We have been committed to delivering positive results to Missourians, and this budget continues in that tradition. All of these increases in funding were done without a single tax increase. These increases were achieved due to the reforms we passed over the last three years that have created more than 90,000 new jobs in Missouri. With more people working at better paying jobs, coupled with our responsible stewardship and careful spending, we are able to increase the benefits Missourians receive across the board without taxpayers feeling a burden on their wallet.