



*Nothing is politically right  
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE  
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion  
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 16, 2008

## **Senate Protect Taxpayers and Students** ***Protects Taxpayers from Backdoor Tax Increases, Sweeping Illegal Immigration Reform and Increased Education Funding***

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Senate advanced a number of key priorities including protecting taxpayers from back door tax increases caused by reassessments, comprehensive illegal immigration reforms, and increasing funding for K-12 education and needs-based scholarships for Missouri students to attend private and public colleges.

Senate Leader Mike Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, noted the Legislature's ability to advance meaningful reforms despite political pundits' predictions that little would succeed in an election year.

"We owed it to the people of Missouri to protect taxpayers from tax increases caused by reassessment, to crack down on illegal immigration in Missouri, and to fully fund education without a tax increase," he said.

The General Assembly sent Senate Bill 711 to the governor that protects Missouri taxpayers from tax increases caused by reassessment. Gibbons sponsored the property tax reform that will also close tax increase loopholes, require earlier notice and more information, and expand tax relief for seniors and the disabled.

"The days of taxpayers getting hit with tax increases because of reassessment are over," he said. "We're protecting taxpayers from being taxed out of their homes and businesses."

House Bill 1549 is a comprehensive illegal immigration reform measure that includes several provisions promoted by Sen. Scott T. Rupp, R-Wentzville, including cracking down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants, detaining illegal immigrants, barring illegal immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses and preventing illegal residents from receiving public benefits.

"These critical reforms send a convincing message that Missouri is prepared to handle a tough issue that has received little action from Washington, D.C.," Rupp said. "Missourians asked lawmakers to address this issue, and we have. And, as we have said all along, Missouri will continue to heartily welcome legal immigrants, but we can no longer tolerate this illegal activity and its harmful economic impact."

The Missouri General Assembly last week advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$22.4 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include a \$121 million increase for the school foundation formula, as well as an additional \$3.5 million increase to fund more eligible students for the A+ Schools Program that covers full tuition for the first two years of college for students who perform well in a participating high school.

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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.

Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and handled the budget bills in the Senate.

“We have continued our commitment to fully fund a new school funding formula that gives all our children an equal opportunity for a great education,” he said. “We added \$121 million without a tax increase, while increasing college scholarships through the A+ and Access Missouri programs and increasing higher education institutions' budgets.”

The increases for higher education represent the third consecutive year universities and community colleges have benefited from Republican leadership.

The budget increases occurred with a tax increase.

Gibbons said the increased funding was possible because of the better revenue picture Missouri has seen over the past three years under Republican leadership. He said changes this year will build on the strong foundation Republicans have created for the people of Missouri.

“More than 90,000 jobs have been created since January 2005 because of changes we have made including ending lawsuit abuse, reforming workers' compensation, and creating the Quality Jobs Act,” he said. “We're building a foundation to give more Missourians more opportunities to work at better paying jobs with benefits.”

The 2008 regular session ended today at 6 p.m. The Senate will next convene during the annual veto session held in September.

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