



Column For Week of: January 7, 2008

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Beginning the 2008 Legislative Session

This week, I joined my colleagues in the Senate as we got the 2008 legislative session underway. This session could be noticeably different from others thanks to an upcoming election year, but, just like my previous sessions in the Senate, I am sure there will be plenty of debate, discussion, and compromise. It is my goal that we come together as a legislative body in order to create good policy that can move Missouri forward.

As an elected official, it is my duty to represent the interests and concerns of my district. This is why I am so focused on developing legislation that will affect all of us, not just a certain few. There are issues I would like to deal with this year that I feel have not been addressed fully in the past. Healthcare and education are some of the areas where I don't think enough progress has been made. The percentage of the state budget devoted to K-12 education is currently less than in the past. In fact, the Missouri courts have decided that we are meeting only the bare minimum to stay within compliance of the law. Higher education has also suffered and institutes of higher learning have had to find ways to provide a quality education with limited funding. In 2005, the governor cut children and families from state sponsored healthcare. These cuts deprived needy Missourians of medical coverage, and we should be focused on restoring health care to kids, elderly, and the disabled.

There are other issues where I feel we can all see eye-to-eye. Every year, the General Assembly is constitutionally charged with creating the state's spending plan. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am continually focused on the long-

term effects of spending and looking at any funding new policies will require. We need to make sure that Missouri's critical needs are met, while also keeping the future in view and making sure we have sustainable growth. There is no doubt that we will face challenges with the 2009 budget, but I also believe that we can work together to create a plan that is good for our state.

Property tax is another issue that has already surfaced as a major concern on both sides of the aisle. Citizens throughout Missouri are facing soaring property tax bills — a problem created when the assessed value of a property rises. Taxing entities should roll back their tax levy so that their revenue stays close to previous years, but not all have been doing that. This makes it so that Missourians are paying higher taxes, without ever agreeing to an increase. In rural Missouri, the aging population is struggling to afford the taxes on their own homes and farms. Throughout the state, families are affected by this issue, and it is one I hope to be able to solve so that the citizens in the state of Missouri will no longer have to deal with this growing problem.

No two legislative sessions are alike, but I am sure that the Second Regular Session of the 94th General Assembly will, like the sessions before it, contain challenges as well as successes. I want to encourage you to contact me with any concerns you may have, and I will do my best to address them. I will also work to keep you up-to-date with what is going on in the Legislature and what I am doing to serve you.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to call me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2108. You can also write to at the address listed below.

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