



Column For Week of: January 14, 2008

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Change Missouri for the Better

Week two of the 2008 legislative session is almost over, and we are quickly getting back into the swing of things. There is definitely a positive attitude dominating many of the discussions so far, and I am excited for what we can accomplish this session.

Early in the week, the governor delivered the annual State of the State Address. While I was pleased the governor's recommendations included some increases for education and health care, I am disappointed that he seems to be willing to start new programs without first fulfilling our obligations to existing programs.

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I paid particular attention to the portion of the speech that contained the governor's budget recommendations. The proposal is a \$21.3 billion spending plan. The fact that the budget proposal includes increases to K-12 education, higher education, and agriculture is certainly a positive aspect of the plan. I will work hard with my colleagues over the next several months to form these recommendations into a realistic, responsible spending plan that invests tax dollars wisely. I will continue to keep you up-to-date on the progress we are making.

There are some other parts of the address that brought to light some concerns I have for the future of our state. One of these issues is healthcare. In 2005, the governor cut nearly 100,000 Missourians from their state-sponsored healthcare, including children, elderly, and the disabled. In his speech, the governor talked about making sure that citizens in the state have access to healthcare, however, the cuts in 2005 are the reason why Missouri's neediest are currently struggling to have access to basic care. It is my hope that

this year we can work together to push our state forward and make sure kids, elderly, and the disabled in Missouri have access to healthcare. Fixing Missouri's broken healthcare system is the responsible thing to do.

The governor's speech seemed to imply that there is little we need to do to change the way things are going in our state. I think there is plenty we can do to improve and better Missouri, and I am working with my Senate colleagues to do just that. We need to craft laws that will repair the damage that has been done by under-funding important programs in our state. We can give support to our public education, higher education, and healthcare— a wise investment in our state's future economy — by crafting policy that will actually promote change, rather than just tolerate current conditions.

The legislative session is just beginning. Already, more than 250 Senate bills have been filed. I will work hard to make sure the legislation we pass this year will promote progress and growth in our state so that we can move Missouri forward.

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.

Contact Information

Capitol Office
State Capitol Building
Room 427
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/barnitz>

Phone Number:
573.751.2108
Fax:
573.526.0573