



Column For Week of: December 15, 2008

[Website](#) | [Email Me](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

An Update from the Capitol

The 2009 legislative session starts in January, but much is already going on here in Jefferson City. Legislators were able to begin pre-filing bills on December 1, and I will be letting you know about some of the legislation I have filed in a later column. I do want to let you know about some of the recent events going on at the Capitol:

Economy Presents Challenges For State Budget

Last week, my colleagues and I on the Senate Appropriations Committee spent the week listening to public testimony on state programs and funding. Crafting the state budget is the one constitutional duty Missouri lawmakers must perform each year, and it's a challenging process in any year. However, because of the economic downturn, this year is going to be especially challenging. Families throughout the state are struggling to pay the bills while they worry about the security of their jobs, and businesses are feeling the effects as consumers spend less. Missourians are working harder, but are having a tough time making ends meet.

It is becoming increasingly apparent that Missouri is headed for a substantial budget shortfall. Disturbing numbers are beginning to surface as revenue estimates begin to drop drastically from previous estimates. While month-to-month fluctuations are normal in any fiscal year, the widening gap reveals that we will be facing significant challenges.

Last week, a series of public hearings were held that gave citizens from throughout the state the opportunity to share their opinions on state programs and funding. Some of the testimony included individuals who utilize vocational rehabilitation services, members of law enforcement departments who keep their communities safe with the help of public

safety funding, and parents of children who use the state's health and mental health services. This testimony provides the Senate Appropriations Committee with valuable information from the very individuals we are elected to serve, and I appreciate each and every person who made the effort to share their thoughts with us.

The good news about our state's spending plan is that Missouri is in a much better situation than many other states. Our careful planning in previous years should prevent us from facing a catastrophic shortfall. I will continue to keep you up to date on what is going on in our state and our economy. I know that many are worried about the current economy, and I promise to work hard to make sure that we meet the needs of the citizens of this state while keeping fiscal responsibility at the forefront of our minds.

A New Resource for Information on the Missouri Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Leonard Wood

Citizens interested in information about the Veterans' Cemetery at Fort Leonard Wood now have a new resource. I recently posted an online publication with details about the project on my website.

In November, a groundbreaking ceremony was held at the site of what will be Missouri's fifth veterans' cemetery. The cemetery's initial construction will consist of 25 acres that will be developed, with an estimated 25 to 30 years until additional development is needed. The veterans' cemetery will include an administration building, maintenance facility, a committal shelter for conducting interment services, and a columbarium wall for cremation interment. This is an important project for our community and for the veterans who have dedicated their lives to serving our country. There was a great turnout for the recent groundbreaking for the site, and I want to provide information and photos for all who are interested.

The online publication features an audio message from me, a timeline of the events that led to the cemetery's groundbreaking, and a photo gallery of shots from the recent event. The site can be reached by visiting www.senate.mo.gov/barnitz and clicking on the "[Missouri Veterans' Cemetery Information](#)" link. The site also includes a link to the Missouri Veterans Commission for more information about the State Veterans' Cemetery Program.

I encourage individuals to visit the site in order to learn more about the event and the plans for the cemetery, and I will continue to share the progress that is made as construction

and planning continues.

Looking for Interns

I am looking for local college students who are interested in learning about the legislative process firsthand to apply for an internship with my office for the 2009 legislative session. Interns who work in legislative offices at the Capitol are a big part of what we do here each year, and the experience interns can get here during their internship is very valuable. They get an inside look at how state government works, which is a valuable asset in any career field.

College students from the 16th District (Crawford, Dent, Gasconade, Maries, Montgomery, Osage, Phelps and Pulaski counties) are encouraged to apply. Applicants need to be available on a full or part-time basis during the legislative session, which runs from Jan. 7 to May 15, 2009. Intern responsibilities may include constituent services, research, assisting with drafting legislation, as well as a variety of other duties.

Interested individuals should contact my Capitol office directly by calling **(573) 751-2108** or mailing a resume to **Room 427, State Capitol, Jefferson City, MO 65101**.

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