



PRESS RELEASE

State Senator Wes Shoemyer – 18th District

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SENATOR SHOEMYER BLASTS BOARD'S DECISION TO GIVE MILLIONS IN TAX BREAKS TO KC CHIEFS

JEFFERSON CITY – Senator Wes Shoemyer, D-Clarence, today expressed his outrage that the Missouri Development Finance Board, chaired by Lt. Governor Peter Kinder, has approved \$25-million in state tax credits to the Jackson County Sports Authority for the Kansas City Chiefs to renovate their parking lot. They are asking the state for more money to upgrade Arrowhead Stadium and to create an indoor training facility in St. Joseph. Just two years ago the state gave the Kansas City sports teams \$50-million to help pay for stadium improvements.

“At a time when our state is facing a \$342-million dollar shortfall, with a projected \$1-billion shortfall in the 2010 budget, Missouri lawmakers are going to make some tough decisions on the state budget,” Sen. Shoemyer said. “This non-elected board should not be giving away millions of dollars in state tax credits that benefit professional sports teams owned by millionaires. Plus, when this same board gave the sports teams in Kansas City \$50-million to improve Arrowhead and Kauffman stadiums in 2006, the agreement prohibited them from asking for more money from the state, yet here they are two years later benefiting from another handout.”

Shoemyer says the move just increases the skepticism most people have toward politicians and business leaders.

“I can take you to a county in my district without a single pharmacy, and another county where most folks make about \$16,000 a year,” Sen. Shoemyer said. “These folks are hurting, and it’s like rubbing salt into the wound to watch our government bailing out the big banks while people are losing their jobs and their retirement savings. Now we’re going to help a football team that had about \$260-million in profits over the last ten years improve their parking lot and build an indoor practice facility. Give us a break.”

Shoemyer also says he is frustrated with the efforts of the Missouri Development Finance Board to continuously thwart the will of the Legislature, which has rejected several attempts to provide public subsidies to professional sports teams. The board gave the Cardinals close to \$30-million in 2002 to help finance the new Busch Stadium after lawmakers rejected the request. In 2006, the board gave the Kansas City teams \$50-million to renovate their two stadiums after lawmakers turned back similar requests during the legislative session.

“I think it’s time the Legislature took another look at the Missouri Development Finance Board, which we created in 1982 to help economic development projects that might fail without some help from the state,” Shoemyer said. “Nobody believes the Chiefs or the Royals will leave town if they don’t get more money from the state. And considering the economic mess we face right now, this is absolutely the worst possible time to be approving millions in state tax credits.”

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Shoemyer says he only learned about the MDFB meeting yesterday when a reporter called him for a comment. He says lawmakers may consider adding a layer of legislative oversight to the board.

“We may need to pass something saying the board has to get our approval before it can sign off on any projects over \$10-million,” Sen. Shoemyer said. “I also don’t like the way the board changed the rules today by removing the \$10-million cap on what entities can apply for. Approving these new tax credits creates another \$12.5-million hole in the budget in 2010 and again in 2011 – which is money that could have been used to expand Medicaid or increase the prisoner per diem paid to counties.”

Shoemyer also questioned board members at Tuesday’s meeting in Jefferson City about the wisdom of helping to finance an indoor practice facility.

“My football coach made us practice in all kinds of weather because that’s what we were going to have to deal with on game night,” Shoemyer said. “For teams in the Midwest, the weather is kind of like the 12th player on the team – sometimes it gives the home team an advantage. By practicing indoors, the Chiefs are giving up their home-field advantage, unless they plan to put a dome over Arrowhead.”

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