



MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week
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State of the State Predicts Successful Year

JEFFERSON CITY — On Jan. 15th, the governor delivered the State of the State Address. The reason for this speech is to give the governor a chance to address the General Assembly and talk about the accomplishments of the previous year, his priorities for the upcoming year, and his budget proposal. I agree with the governor that the state of our state is strong. I am also pleased with many of the issues he addressed because they are reflective of my own priorities for this year—measures I believe will help us continue to improve our state

The creation of the fiscal year 2009 budget begins with the governor's budget proposal. These recommendations are then used to craft a responsible budget that wisely invests Missourians' tax dollars. One of these wise investments that the governor highlighted in his speech is an increase for public education. In 2005, the General Assembly passed a bill containing a new funding formula in order to appropriate money to local school districts based on student need, not property value. The governor's budget proposals contained a total of \$121.3 million of foundation formula funding for our public schools.

Another exciting part of the budget proposal expands on work we completed last year. During the 2007 legislative session, we passed legislation that created more need-based scholarship opportunities for Missouri students at community colleges, public universities, and private colleges. The governor is requesting a \$27.9 million increase for the program so that even more Missouri students will be able to pursue higher education.

As chairman of the Senate Education Committee, I am pleased with the governor's proposed increases in education, both for higher education and elementary and secondary education.

Illegal immigration is an issue that I am definitely concerned about. I am disappointed that Washington has yet to adequately act to resolve this issue, and I think it is time for Missouri to stand up and say that we will not tolerate illegal activity in our state. The governor addressed this issue in his speech, and I support his call to action. This is certainly a priority for me this year, and I will work with my Senate colleagues to find ways to address the problem of illegal immigration.

The governor's State of the State Address touched on many of the issues we will be dealing with this session. I am pleased that his priorities are aligned with my own, and I look forward to a busy session. I am hopeful that we can pass legislation that will make a positive impact on our state.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (573) 751-3859.

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Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.