

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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Schools Getting An A+ Budget

JEFFERSON CITY — As a member of the General Assembly's appropriations conference committee, four of my Senate colleagues and I, along with five representatives from the House, have been working together in recent days to negotiate budget allocations to determine how the proposed \$22.6 billion budget will fund the critical functions of state government to benefit Missouri citizens.

As chair of the Senate Education Committee, I am particularly pleased with the conference committee's recommendations for education. They include fully funding the state's school Foundation Formula at \$121.3 million (a 22 percent increase since 2005 without a tax increase) and \$95.8 million for the Access Missouri Scholarship Program — a program that provides annual scholarships for Missouri students to attend public or private colleges or universities. I am also extremely pleased that we agreed to increase the higher education budget by 6 percent — the third year in a row for growth, again without raising your taxes.

Several budget bills are still under consideration, and I promise to commit my best judgment and professional ability to presenting a fair and reasonable budget for the people of Missouri.

Education Measures First to Advance to Governor

Two education measures were among the first bills to reach the governor's desk this legislative year. My Senate Bill 967 will allow the Higher Education Loan Authority of the State of Missouri (MOHELA) to originate federal Stafford student loans. This will help ensure the state student loan organization's long-term financial stability and the availability of low-cost student loans to Missouri students and families.

The other measure, Senate Bill 1066, offers working professionals an opportunity to bring their real-world experience to the classroom through a certification program that will allow them to teach in public and private secondary schools. Participants must complete certification from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C. that is funded through federal grants.

In addition to coursework and certification exams, prospective teachers will be required to already hold a bachelor's degree or higher, complete a background check, and verify the ability to work with children by completing 60 hours of classroom instruction under the supervision of a mentor-teacher. (The bill exempts early childhood, elementary and special education, where a teacher must still receive traditional certification.)

Missouri is in desperate need of qualified teachers in the classrooms, especially in the areas of math and science. To fill these positions, it's necessary that we look to alternatives to get capable educators into our classrooms as soon as possible.

With only two weeks left in this legislative session, there will be plenty of shirt sleeves rolled up and late hours logged as we work to complete this year's legislative session. I feel privileged to be a part of this extraordinary process and will continue to do my best to forward meaningful legislation that positively affects the lives of our citizens of southeast Missouri.

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