

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



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## The 2009 Missouri Budget

JEFFERSON CITY — Missouri's \$22.4 billion budget has arrived at the governor's desk balanced and ahead of schedule, and I am pleased to report includes increased funding for K-12 schools, public colleges and universities, transportation, agriculture, health care, and life sciences, among other areas.

As I mentioned last week, education was a top priority during budget negotiations and an area I worked closely in as Senate Education Committee chair, vice-chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee and a member of the appropriations conference committee that included legislators from both sides of the General Assembly. When the final numbers were put to ink, I was pleased we were able to provide a 2.4 percent increase in funding for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, including more for A+ Schools — for a total appropriation of \$5.3 billion. This also includes a more than \$121 million increase for the Foundation Formula, which now appropriates money to local school students based on student need, not property value. This year, \$159.1 million of Foundation Formula funding will go to schools in the 25<sup>th</sup> District.

In addition, higher education will receive a 7.8 percent increase, for a total appropriation of \$1.2 billion. This includes a \$48.7 million increase in Access Missouri scholarships, a \$6.2 million increase for community colleges and a \$33.6 million budget increase for four-year institutions. (Three Rivers Community College in Poplar Bluff will receive \$4.8 million.)

The Department of Transportation budget includes a \$483 million increase in funding for the department's construction program to maintain our roads and infrastructure. Among those projects is \$6.7 million for several Missouri Port Authority capital improvement projects, the bulk of which are located in southeast Missouri. They include projects in Pemiscot and New Madrid counties and in our neighboring port authorities.

I am also pleased to report the Missouri Department of Agriculture will see an 8.2 percent increase in its budget, for a total appropriation of nearly \$77 million. This includes increased investments in new generation cooperatives that are helping add value to our agriculture products right here at home and in turn helping to boost our rural economy. The boll weevil eradication program, an important endeavor in our part of the state, will also be fully funded once again.

Other highlights of this year's proposed budget include a \$21 million increase for

life sciences research and funding for health care services, such as an additional \$7.4 million for autism services and \$13 million to provide better access to health care for low-income women.

Other funding increases that will affect the 25<sup>th</sup> District include more dollars for the state schools for the severely handicapped and more than \$700,000 for the planning, design and construction of a new dormitory building at the W.E. Sears Youth Center in Poplar Bluff.

The 2009 fiscal year budget goes into effect on July 1. Let me assure you that your tax dollars are all being directed to beneficial programs, departments and facilities that are designed to improve the lives of citizens in the 25<sup>th</sup> District and throughout the state.

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