

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



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End of a Productive Legislative Session

JEFFERSON CITY — When the General Assembly's legislative session ended Friday, a number of meaningful pieces of legislation intended to benefit Missouri citizens had made their way to the governor's desk for signing into law. Among them were bills I sponsored dealing with copper theft, expanding loan opportunities through the state's student loan organization, helping Missouri schools rebuild following a catastrophic event, and allowing stretches of highways to be named after law enforcement or military persons.

The session proved to be a very busy and productive one for me as well as vice-chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, chair of the Senate Education Committee and a member of the appropriations conference committee that ironed out the details of the state's \$22.4 billion budget. I was pleased that we presented a balanced budget, complete with increased funding for K-12 schools, public colleges and universities, transportation, agriculture, health care, and life sciences, among other areas. While many states' budgets are unstable, Missouri's budget remains in relatively good financial shape, thanks to the commitment of elected officials dedicated to the state living within its means — just as you are required to do. Given the current economic climate, the conference committee was very mindful of our state's slowing revenue stream of state sales taxes, individual income taxes and corporate income taxes and carefully considered any budget expansions during the appropriation process. Our goal was to avoid spending in a way that would set a pattern requiring us to scale back in the future by committing dollars that may not be available in future years.

During the past 18 weeks or so in Jefferson City, I also co-sponsored or lent support to a number of other measures, including increasing sheriff's pay for our county sheriff department personnel across the state and allowing individuals interested in teaching an opportunity to bring their life and work experience to the classroom through a teacher certification program from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE).

I was also pleased that I was able to help direct money to several Missouri Port Authority capital improvements in our area, including ones in New Madrid and Pemiscot counties. By allowing those facilities to build and grow, we strengthen our economic stability and attract more business to our area. I was pleased to also help secure a three-year research project

with the Soil and Water Districts Commission that will study sprinkler-irrigated rice as a means to reduce water usage, energy costs, and nitrogen fertilizer. Research will be conducted at the University of Missouri Delta Research Center in Portageville. In addition, I was able to help secure \$250,000 for capital improvements for the Poplar Bluff Vocational Technical Center.

Just this week, I was instrumental in encouraging the General Assembly to urge the U.S. Department of Agriculture to add June 1 and September 1 as additional rice reporting dates on the Agricultural Statistics Board Calendar. If endorsed in Washington, this will help the USDA capture more accurate pricing that reflects current market prices and rice stocks.

While there is some disappointment when some of your pieces of legislation do not make it through the entire legislative process, it's not necessarily a bad thing. I appreciate the time and deliberation and the framework our Founding Fathers gave us and vow to continue forwarding legislation that matters to the people of southeast Missouri.

As we head into summer, I will continue to do my best to represent the interests of my constituents, and, as always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact my office at (573) 751-3859.

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