



Office of
Jason Crowell State
Senator

The Crowell Connection



Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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A Successful Session

Working to Make Tomorrow Better than Today

On May 16, the final gavel fell and the 2008 legislative session concluded. Our work was marked with accomplishments and successes throughout the productive session. In addition to the 138 bills that were sent to the governor, we balanced the state's budget without increasing taxes for the fourth year in a row.

Improving Education



Education is my highest priority. The total funding increase for education over the last four years now tops \$1.2 billion. This year's budget again provides a significant funding increase for our K-12 classrooms, including a \$121.2 million increase for elementary and secondary schools. The public schools in Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Scott, and Perry

counties will receive a 3.53 percent increase over last year's funding, for a total of \$75 million.

For higher education, there is a \$43 million increase for colleges and universities, and an additional \$23.8 million increase for needs-based scholarships, which nearly quadruples the funding available for scholarships four years ago, a total of \$91.5 million. These increases for higher education include funding for Southeast Missouri State University and its

satellite campuses as well. A total of \$48.6 million was appropriated to help Southeast Missouri State continue to provide a quality education to Missouri students, a 4.3 percent increase over last year.

In addition, \$820,000 in capital improvements funding will go towards projects at Southeast Missouri State University satellite campuses in the communities of Sikeston and Perryville. The city of Sikeston has generously supported construction and expansion at Southeast Missouri State University-Sikeston. A total of \$400,000 will help the city of Sikeston fulfill their financial obligation and will free up funding in Sikeston's budget for other municipal projects. The Perryville Higher Education Center, a collaborative effort between Southeast Missouri State University and Mineral Area Community College, was designed to allow local students to attend college classes in a convenient and comfortable atmosphere. The Perryville Higher Education Center will received \$420,000 in order to make improvements and renovations on the campus.

Property Tax Reform

This year, we successfully passed legislation that will protect Missouri taxpayers and homeowners from skyrocketing local property taxes. Senate Bill 711 institutes mandatory levy rollbacks so that taxing entities cannot unfairly raise property taxes higher than the rate of inflation. The legislation also includes provisions to keep tax payers better informed on their property tax obligation and requires the information to be provided earlier in the year.

The bill also contains increases for the Property Tax Credit Claim program, which allows these seniors and the disabled to receive a credit on their tax bill for the property taxes or rent that they have paid over the past year. Senate Bill 711 increases assistance from \$750 to \$1,100 for seniors and the disabled. The income eligibility for homeowners also increases from \$27,500 to \$30,000 for singles and from \$29,500 to \$40,000 for married couples. This part of the legislation works to ensure that no one in this state has to struggle to afford a place to live, especially not our seniors.

Curbing Illegal Immigration

This year we enacted tough legislation to help Missouri in the fight against illegal immigration. House Bill 1549 will crack down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants. The legislation also creates new penalties for helping an illegal immigrant obtain a driver's license by fraud, prevents "sanctuary cities" in Missouri that would obstruct law enforcement efforts when enforcing immigration laws, increases efforts to prevent illegal immigrants from receiving public benefits, and makes it a crime to transport any illegal immigrant for exploitive purposes (including illegal labor).



Autism Awareness

There are more than 34,000 Missourians affected by an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This year, I worked to ensure that families in our state who are confronted with the realities of autism on a daily basis have the resources they need for diagnosis and treatment. We approved more than \$17 million in new funding to support autism services, help ensure a higher quality of life, and enhance opportunities for children with autism.

Autism resources in our areas will also receive funding. Last year, we passed the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative, which included \$2.638 million for a new Southeast Missouri Autism Center. This center will provide diagnosis, treatment, education, and research in autism for patients in Southeast Missouri. The FY 2009 budget includes \$480,000 for the center.

I am proud of the accomplishments of this session and the past four years I have spent in the Missouri Senate. During this time, we have worked to make tomorrow better than today. This session, we have once again delivered legislation that will benefit you and improve Missouri.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free

to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov or visit me on the web at <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

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