



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of January 21, 2008

Reflecting on the Past, Looking Forward

This week, many in the Capitol were surprised by an announcement by Gov. Matt Blunt that he is not going to run for reelection in November. The governor stated that he feels the goals he had for Missouri three years ago have been achieved, and I certainly agree that we have made progress since he was sworn in. I want to extend my thanks to the governor for his service and for his help completing all we have accomplished.

Since the governor came into office in 2005, we have had the opportunity to pass successful legislation and craft responsible spending plans for our state. While cutting taxes, education funding was increased. In 2005, we created a new funding formula based on student need to fund public schools in Missouri. In 2007, higher education became a focus as we worked to make colleges and universities in Missouri more accessible, affordable, and accountable. Since fiscal year 2006, including the funding the governor proposed for FY2009, total increases for education — both K-12 and higher education — will reach a monumental \$1.2 billion. Before the governor took office, Missouri was withholding education funding, but we now have the largest education budget in the state's history.

The governor's record of success extends into other arenas as well. We've protected Missouri's businesses by revising workers' compensation laws in an effort to lower insurance premiums. Tort reform is another priority we addressed by putting caps on the damages plaintiffs are able to seek — effectively lowering the number of frivolous lawsuits filed. Missouri has gone from having the 47th best pavement on major roads to the 9th — a jump made possible by the governor's leadership. Another effort that has seen progress is the rights of the unborn. We

have gone from 10 to three abortion clinics in the state, and last year, Missouri had the lowest number of abortions performed since 1975.

I understand that this decision was a tough one for the governor. For the past three years he has worked with the Legislature to make sure that Missouri did not continue down its destructive path. He worked with lawmakers to create well thought-out and fiscally responsible policies that have changed our state for the better. We have the opportunity to make even more positive changes to improve our state, and I look forward to what we will accomplish this year.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*