



# WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler  
District 32



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**Week of January 7, 2008**

## The Legislative Session Begins

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This week, I joined my colleagues in Jefferson City for the start of the 2008 legislative session. I have learned during my years in the Legislature that no two sessions are ever the same, but we can always count on a fair amount of debate, discussion, and compromise as we craft laws for our state. As the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, much of my focus this session will be on the budget as we work to create a fiscally responsible spending plan that provides for Missouri's needs. As my colleagues work diligently to get their bills passed, my focus will be on how the cost of each measure will affect our budget and, in turn, the programs that benefit Missourians.

On December 1, prefiled legislation was numbered and available to the public. There are already over 200 Senate Bills that have been prefiled, and lawmakers have until March 1 to file legislation. A Senate bill is first discussed in a Senate committee, and this is the opportunity for the public to testify about the measure. The committee votes on the bill, and it is then sent to the full Senate for debate. A majority vote sends the bill to the House, where it goes through the same process (House Bills start the process in the House of Representatives and then move to the Senate). Any differences between the House and Senate are solved during a conference committee, and the bill is then sent to the governor for his approval and signature.

The process of passing legislation can be frustrating and complex. One of the most used phrases in crafting laws is "subject to appropriations" because every new program or initiative needs money. As the Senator for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Senatorial District, I am still concerned about the interests of my constituents, but I am also responsible for the budget interests of the state as a whole. This new statewide responsibility requires that I look beyond my advocacy for the district to the needs of all Missourians. However, the status also gives agencies and departments

the desire to prove the value of their programs in my district. This balance will keep the priorities of Southwest Missouri protected.

Between now and May, there will be plenty of discussion on the budget process and Missouri's fiscal future. Speculation on the economic forecast and concerns over spending are just a few of the issues that will arise. I will work hard to make sure that the crafting of the budget and the legislative process in general is handled in a responsible way that benefits all Missourians.

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