



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of Dec. 8, 2008

Citizens Testify on State Programs

Public Hearings Mark Beginning of the FY 2010 Appropriations Process

Since 2003, I have served on the Senate Appropriations Committee, and in 2007, I became the chairman. Last year, I was very pleased with the work the committee accomplished in making sure that your hard-earned tax dollars were invested wisely and carefully. My committee will continue to do everything that we can to meet Missouri's most pressing needs within the constraints of fiscal responsibility.

Concerns about the economy are on everyone's mind, and it is hard to address the state's financial future without first recognizing the national economic downturn. I am pleased to say that our state is in a much better fiscal situation than many, but crafting our budget this year will still require our close attention to revenue estimates and, as always, carefully thought-out fiscal decisions.

Every year, we are constitutionally required to craft the state's spending plan, and the budget process begins before the previous legislative session even ends. During the 2008 session and the interim that began in May, we were already looking at priorities and legislation that will affect state spending for Fiscal Year 2010 (beginning on July 1, 2009). We have also been keeping a close eye on the state's revenue to see how the slowing economy will affect the current and next budget. The Senate Appropriations staff, Office of Administration members, the House Budget Committee and the University of Missouri Economics department will soon be releasing a consensus revenue estimate for us to use during the appropriations process.

This week, a series of public hearings took place in order to hear testimony on the state's finances. This is the time set aside for citizens to raise issues or voice concerns they have with the way state programs are funded, and I found it very helpful to hear this valuable information from a broad cross section of Missouri citizens throughout our state. The hearings provide a front line

perspective on state funding, helping me gain insight from the viewpoints of the people who use the very programs the budget funds.

Those who testified at the hearing included parents whose children utilize health or mental health services, police officers who receive state programs to help keep their communities safe, and teachers providing perspectives on education in the state. Members of the business community also had the opportunity to give their views on programs meant to improve the economy of the state. This testimony has an impact on the establishment of the priorities funded by this state, so it is appropriate that some of the input comes straight from the citizens that we have been elected to serve.

Over the next six months, there will be extensive deliberations, debate, and reflection about how the state should spend funds and how the current economy will affect these choices. I will continue to keep you up to date on the progress we are making to create a well thought-out spending plan for Missouri. Our goal is always to improve our state and the lives of its citizens without spending more public dollars than we have to work with.

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