



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of April 14, 2008

Missouri's Spending Plan Progresses

As the Senate Appropriations Committee chairman, much of my focus during the legislative session is on the process of crafting the state's budget. This week, the appropriations bills were discussed and passed on the Senate floor.

My colleagues and I have been working hard to come up with the best use for Missouri's tax dollars. While partisanship often rules in the political process, our work in committee was a refreshingly bipartisan effort. The members of the committee are dedicated to meeting the needs of Missourians in a fiscally responsible way, and I am deeply appreciative of each member that reached across party lines to work towards this fundamental goal. The committee's collegiality has largely continued on the floor where the 13 bills passed without amendments.

The budget as it currently stands is a \$22.6 billion spending plan, which includes increases for virtually every area of state government. These increases (totaling \$356.4 million) are deliberately designed to meet Missouri's most pressing needs. Some of the increases are smaller than initial recommendations because they are based on the most up-to-date revenue estimates and reflect a dedication to rational fiscal discipline. These funds do not belong to the state, but rather the taxpayers of Missouri and we consider this fact when dealing with each budget issue.

We cannot ignore the current state of the nation's economy, and this is why we are working to make sure that this year's budget is focused on meeting the essential needs of citizens in the state while also reining in any explosive growth. It is important that, with the 2009 fiscal year budget, we keep the future in mind. Fiscal year 2010 is uncertain for expansion and, candidly, could possibly require scaling back. While the budget was being debated on the Senate floor, this is a reality I encouraged my Senate colleagues to keep in mind so that any core budget increases do not reach beyond a reasonable expectation for economic expansion.

The constitutional deadline to complete the budget is May 9th, and the FY 2009 spending plan will take effect July 1, 2008. The next step in the process is to discuss the budget bills in a conference committee with House members to iron out differences between the two chambers. I will continue to keep you informed on the progress of Missouri's budget.

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