

For Immediate Release

SHARING A

March 13, 2008

VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

The Senate will finish up on the first half of the legislative session this week and begin its annual spring break. The Senate Appropriations Committee has finished its first overview of the state budget and will begin working on the official state budget as the Senate convenes for the second half of this legislative session. The House should pass its version of the official budget this week so it should be ready to come to the Senate after spring break.

The Senate gave first-round approval to Senate Substitute for Senate Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 898, an agricultural bill that creates tens of millions of dollars in tax breaks and subsidies. The bill was fairly simple as it started out and had some good provisions such as making fence supplies purchased for agricultural purposes tax exempt.

It also contained clarifying language that pertains to equipment purchased by sawmills and the wood industry to be listed also as tax exempt. This issue came to life a year or so ago when an official with the Department of Revenue ruled that equipment bought by the forest products industry would no longer be tax exempt as had always been the policy. This rule was overturned, but clarification was needed in the law.

In addition, the bill contained several proposals for agricultural tax credits, subsidies and, exemptions that have failed in recent years. By the time the smoke had cleared in the Senate Chamber, the bill had taken on more than fifteen amendments during the perfecting process and contained state aid to farmers, animal feeding operations, gas stations, motorists who buy bio-fuels, ethanol producers, dairies, livestock farmers, certain vehicle buyers, and an agriculture education program.

What is really distressing to me is that supporters of the bill stress how important these government programs are to the agricultural industry. They say that the recipients of these tax credits have been hard hit by rising fuel, feed, fertilizer, and other farming costs caused by intervention of the government into areas such as the bio fuels industry.

So, in other words, we have to create still more government programs to repair the damage brought on by existing government programs. What makes it really ironic is that the Missouri State Senate stands poised to pass another bio fuel mandate. The 5% bio-diesel mandate would require the fuel industry to buy bio-diesel from our heavily state-subsidized fuel production plants here in Missouri. Everything that is passed to help one special interest group causes another interest group to ask for something to fix the problems created.

This is not the fault of special interest groups. It is the fault of the people you elected into office to represent our districts and to put the best interest of the state in the forefront of our management of our state budget and policies. It is our fault that I believe the will of the silent majority is overlooked.

If elected officials are all against more government spending and programs, more taxes and fees, more regulation, why do we continue to have more? It is not the fault of the lobbyists or the special interest groups that work outside the chambers of the House and Senate. They have no legal authority. They have no ability to coerce a senator, a representative, or a governor into doing anything.

The politician has the power to say yes or no. If this government continues to grow and cost more, we have no one to blame but ourselves as elected officials.

We have met the enemy and they are us.

I welcome your opinions and suggestions. You may reach me at 573-751-1882, e-mail to chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov, or write to me at the Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101. If you would like to receive these newsletters electronically, please call or e-mail my office.

#####