

For Immediate Release

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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

Have you ever heard the saying that it is always easier to spend someone else's money? That is never truer than in any type of government, whether it be national, state, or local.

The key to spending the public's dollars is to keep the silent majority in mind and invest their money wisely, not allow the howling hordes of lobbyists that hang around the halls of your state's or nation's capitol to have undue influence on the policy makers who are elected by you.

It is with a certain degree of frustration that I write this week's column, because I feel that the financial well-being of the silent majority is losing the fight in this high-stakes battle over public dollars. In the past twelve years that I have spent on the budget committee in both the House and Senate, I have seen good times come and go. When you live through the bad times, you feel a need to balance the state spending in an effort to avoid putting at risk the basic services that our poor and elderly and growing Missouri families need to educate and raise another generation of Missourians.

In this year's budget process, our appropriations bills are currently in conference committee. A conference committee is made up of five members of the Senate and five members of the House. These members work out differences between the House and Senate budget numbers.

As you may remember, the Governor this year proposed a budget with approximately \$700 million in additional spending in both ongoing and new programs. Earlier in the year, many members of the budget committees in the House and Senate had discussions and concerns that this number must be reduced to prevent problems in next year's budget.

Being one of the senior members of the budget committee, it was always assumed that I would be one of the five from the Senate to work on a compromise in this year's budget. This week, I was not named to be on the conference committee because I would not commit to supporting the Senate position when it came to increased spending and voting to add new decision items to this year's budget. My position is founded on the fact that, based on trimming the Governor's number by \$125 million to around \$575 million in new spending, we will be in a budget deficit next year by approximately \$416 million.

This deficit is based on maintaining the same growth as last year budget of 3.4%. I don't know about you, but it will be very hard to maintain state revenue growth this year at the same pace as last year. Every day we watch as the dollar drops in value and the cost of food, fuel, and basic cost of living goes higher and higher. Not a weekend goes by that I do not have heart to heart talks with people across the district who are concerned with growing costs and their inability to keep pace with today's rampant inflation.

With this in mind, to avoid future budget shortfalls beginning next year it would be very important to reduce spending in this year's budget. We should at least only spend what revenues we have coming in and not balance our spending by falling back on previous years' budget surpluses.

Unfortunately, that is not the direction that we will be taking. Much to my dismay and concern for our financial future, we will not be listening to the silent majority across the state, but again to the wolves of bigger government who will feed well on this year's fiscal feast of your tax dollars.

As always, I appreciate any suggestions you may have that will help improve the lives of the people of this legislative district. You are welcome to contact me at: Missouri Senate, 201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101, my telephone number is 573-751-1882 or email at chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov.

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