



The Crowell Connection

On May 15th, we concluded the 2009 legislative session.

This year, we addressed ways to honor our veterans, provided help to families dealing with autism, and worked hard to turn around Missouri's economy.

I am proud to announce that K-12 schools will again receive an increase in funding. Despite a complex and challenging budget year, we were also able to increase higher education funding.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Southeast Missouri as your state senator.

Jason Crowell

INSIDE:



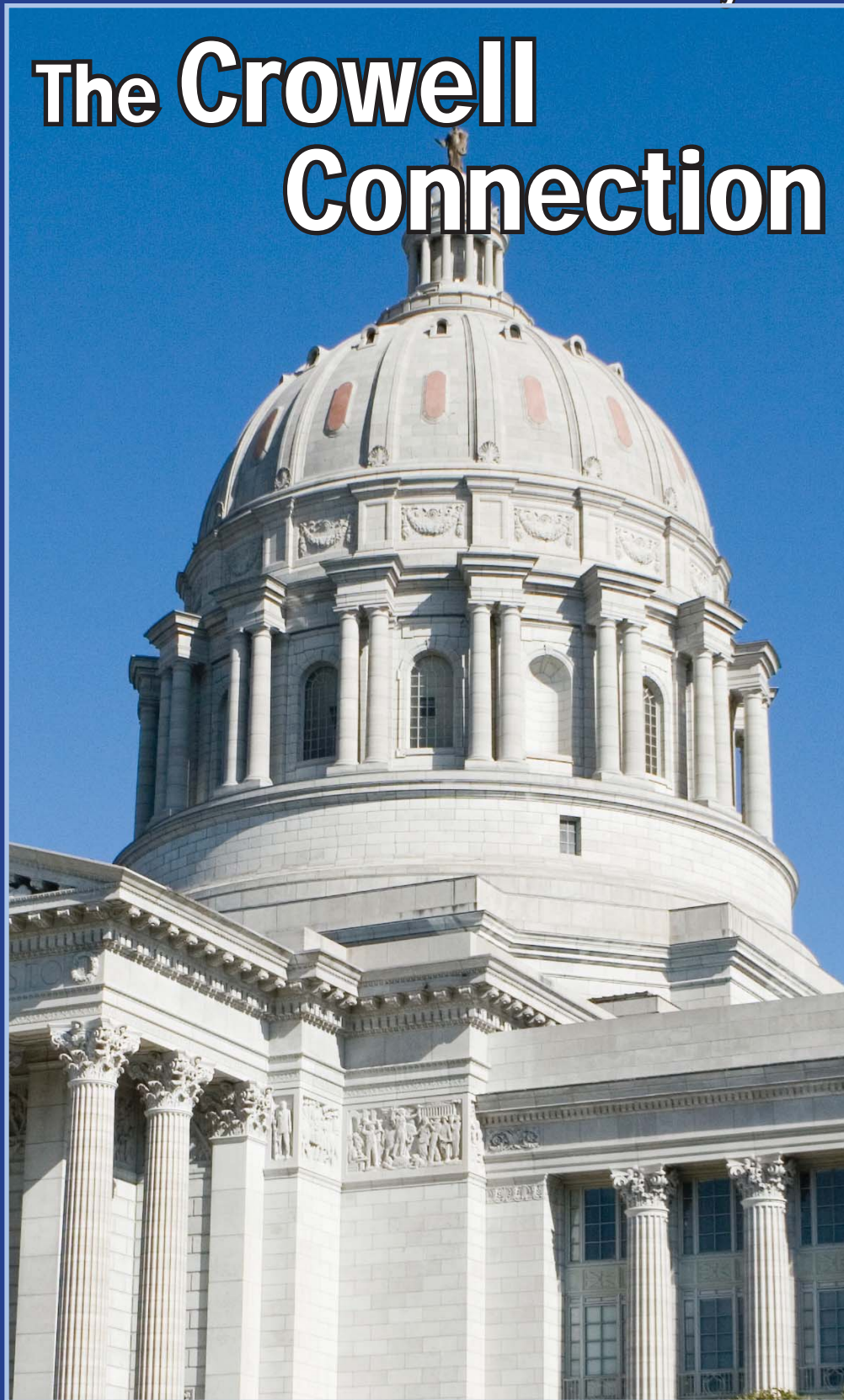
**Quality
Education
Page 2**



**Our
Economy
Page 4**



**Honoring
Heroes
Page 6**



A World-Class Education



Jason speaks to a group of 4th-graders visiting the Capitol from Clippard Elementary School in Cape Girardeau.

Increased K-12 Education Funding

We have made great strides for Missouri's public education program. Since 2005, we have substantially increased funding to our local K-12 schools. This funding has provided a \$540 million increase statewide, with Southeast Missouri schools receiving a \$13 million increase during the same period.

We have continued our commitment to fully fund the school funding formula. This year, we added \$63 million for public schools, **without a tax increase**. This is the fourth year of meeting our promise to fund the new formula for K-12 students.

Funding education is the best investment Missouri can make for the future of our state. The budget for fiscal year 2010, which began July 1, 2009, contains a \$2.6 million increase for schools in Southeast Missouri. This brings this year's total state funding for our area schools to \$77.3 million, a 3.5 percent increase over the previous year.

In addition to this increase, our local schools will receive \$10.7 million in one-time federal stimulus dollars allocated through this year's budget. This one-time funding will go directly to school districts, which will have the

opportunity to ultimately decide how to best utilize these dollars that will enrich every student's education.

The disbursement of the funding, which includes Title I and Federal Special Education funds, is based on student assessment scores, socio-economic status of both the students and their communities, and percentages of students that fall within the appropriate benchmarks, along with numerous other variables. The \$10.7 million is based on a two-year allocation. School

This year, we added \$63 million for public schools, without a tax increase.

districts will submit a proposed spending plan for the funding to the Department of Secondary Education; the approved plan will set out the timing for the funding amounts received over the next two years.

These funds were allocated in House Bill 21 and are temporary in nature. They will only be available on a one-time basis. I am urging school districts to make sure these funds are utilized in a way that will better our schools, while making sure their plans are fiscally sustainable. We must make sure these funds are used on one-time projects so that our schools don't face budget problems when this added funding isn't available two years from now.

Higher Education



Southeast Missouri State University

Missouri students will only be able to compete in a global economy if they have the opportunity to receive a quality higher education. Despite a difficult budget year, higher education received a 3.2 percent increase this year for a total of \$1.3 billion.

The budget includes full funding for Southeast Missouri State

The investments we are making in education today help ensure that Missouri's students will be successful in the future. This is why I continue to make education my highest priority.

University. The university will receive \$48.7 million for their operating budget. In addition, the university will receive \$1.2 million in additional one-time funding that may be used at the university's discretion or for Caring Missouri, an initiative to increase the number of nurses and doctors in the state of Missouri as proposed by the governor.

Your Money

Responsible Spending

We crafted Missouri's \$23.1 billion budget with fiscal responsibility at the forefront of our efforts. Even with the economic downturn facing our nation, we were able to pass a budget **without any tax increases**.

This year's budget process did have some differences when compared to budgets in past years because of bailout funding that came to the state from the federal government. While I remain fundamentally opposed to this plan and the refusal by Washington, D.C., to institute common-sense fiscal policies, I am also dedicated to making sure Missourians benefit from these dollars in the most responsible and effective way since we are on the hook to pay for the bailout.

Senate Bill 313 works to protect taxpayers by properly tracking every dollar Missouri receives through the federal stimulus plan. The bill created two special funds within the state treasury for tracking the receipt and distribution of these temporary funds. This legislation ensures you will have the ability to see how these dollars are spent.



Getting Our Economy Back on Track



Encouraging Businesses to Expand

House Bill 191, the economic development measure passed this year, includes an expansion of the Quality Jobs Act, an incentive program that encourages companies to create new jobs that pay above the average county wage and pay at least half of an employee's health insurance premiums. We increased the cap on this program from \$60 million to \$80 million and removed the cap for high impact and technology companies, encouraging more growth in our state.

Other expansions for important employer-friendly programs include cap increases for New Markets Incentives for companies in

This year, one of the Legislature's top priorities was to pass legislation that would strengthen Missouri's economy and help more Missourians get back to work. It was also important that our work included provisions to protect Missouri taxpayers by requiring tax credit transparency and accountability.

distressed areas from \$15 million to \$25 million. The bill also expands the cap on BUILD (Business Use Incentives for Large-Scale Development) Tax Credits from \$15 million to \$25 million. This program

targets large manufacturing and processing industries. We expect these incentives to encourage expansions by several particular companies, including a St. Louis-based seed-maker and two high tech battery-makers in Lee's Summit and Joplin.

House Bill 191 also expands the Department of Economic Development's job training program, allowing the program to apply to pre-employment training. We also created the Build America Bond Program to allow for more efficient use of the bond provisions in the federal stimulus act.

Protecting Taxpayers with Tax Credit Reform

One of my major concerns this year was the excessive spending and lack of accountability in Missouri's tax credit system. One of the most effective ways of combatting this problem was to fundamentally reform the Missouri Development Finance Board's ability to overstep the legislative caps on tax credit awards. The board has made a practice of awarding practically unlimited tax dollars to professional sports teams.

Although, I am still calling for broader accountability and oversight which, so far, has yet to be endorsed by the General Assembly, a provision was included in HB 191 that limits this board's abusive practices. The measure limits the amount of tax credits

that can be authorized by the MDFB to \$10 million annually, or \$25 million if three executive branch officials give approval. The board could previously issue unlimited tax credits as long as the executive officials gave their approval. Although, in my opinion, it does not go far enough, this reform will help eliminate the excessive spending of the MDFB and promote openness and accountability.

Cutting Taxes

We continue to work to lower the tax burden on Missouri businesses and families.

One provision passed this session will phase out the Corporate Franchise Tax. The provision exempts small businesses in Missouri with less than \$10 million in assets from paying the franchise tax. By halting this tax, we are freeing up money that businesses can reinvest on hiring new employees and growing their business.

In 2007, we passed legislation to phase in a state income tax exemption on Social Security and non-private retirement benefits for those 62 or older. This year, House Bill 82 was approved by the Legislature to expand the exemption for all military retirement benefits, regardless of age. The phase-in will begin in 2010 with a 15 percent exemption and all military retirement income will be completely tax free by 2016.



Capitol Visitors



Jason with Erwin Johnson on April 8th.



Missy Thomas, Jason's FCCLA job shadow on February 25th.



On April 21st, a troop of Girl Scouts from Sikeston visited the Capitol.



This session, I worked on legislation to honor Missouri's heroes. The **Heroes Way Interstate Interchange Designation Program** will allow interstate interchanges in Missouri to be named for service members who have given the ultimate sacrifice. Heroes Way provides an opportunity to memorialize our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines who do not return home. It provides communities throughout Missouri with an opportunity to acknowledge the loss they all feel when one of their own is killed in combat.

I worked with the Missouri Department of Transportation on this bill after I was contacted by Ross Gartman, a former member of the Missouri National Guard, and community members looking for a way to honor those killed in combat in our area. I was then able to work with family members

of Southeast Missouri fallen soldiers to finalize the legislation.

The Heroes Way Interstate Interchange Designation Program will allow relatives to submit their loved one's name to the Missouri Department of Transportation for recognition. In order to be eligible for recognition, an individual must have been killed in action during active military duty in Afghanistan or Iraq on or after September 11, 2001, and must have sponsorship from at least one member of the General Assembly. Once an application is approved, two signs will be erected in the North/South or East/West directions at the designated interstate interchange.



Addressing Local Needs

Helping those with Autism

In Southeast Missouri, we have seen a 107 percent increase in school-age autism diagnoses, and there is much we can do to help the growing number of children and families who are impacted.



In 2007, we passed legislation that included \$2.6 million for a new Southeast

Missouri Autism Center. The last fiscal year's budget included an additional \$494,000 for the Southeast Missouri Autism Center, and this year's funding was maintained at \$494,000.

Expanding Affordable Housing Opportunities



House Bill 802 will help organizations like Habitat for Humanity offer housing to more needy families.



Jason, Governor Jay Nixon, and Ron Ekstrand, the CEO of the Judevine Center for Autism, at an event promoting autism policy in Cape Girardeau.

The Affordable Housing Assistance Program is a contribution tax credit to incentivize donations to affordable housing projects. Businesses and individuals can receive a tax credit of \$.55 for each dollar contributed to a nonprofit affordable housing project.

The Affordable Housing Assistance Program had an income limit (50 percent of the area median income) that made it difficult for organizations like Habitat for Humanity to find households at that income level that can sustain home ownership. House Bill 802, sponsored by Representative Clint Tracy, was passed to double the income limit for owner-occupied housing, allowing more low-income families to become successful homeowners.

Senator Jason Crowell
201 W Capitol Ave Rm 323
Jefferson City, MO 65101

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Jefferson City, MO 65101
Permit No. 220



Contact Senator Jason Crowell

Mail: 201 W. Capitol Ave., Room 323
Jefferson City, MO 65101

E-mail: jcrowell@senate.mo.gov

Phone: (573) 751-2459

Online: www.senate.mo.gov/crowell

Keep up to date on events at the Capitol by subscribing to Jason's weekly reports.
Visit www.senate.mo.gov/crowell and click the "Sign Up to Receive My Newsletter" link.