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## **Missouri Must Be Wise in Spending Federal Stimulus Money**

JEFFERSON CITY — The new Senate Select Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus, of which I was appointed chair, met Jan. 28 for its first meeting to study and analyze strategies for securing the maximum amount of federal dollars for Missouri that is expected to come from the anticipated federal economic stimulus plan of 2009. The committee was recently created so the Legislature can act quickly to adopt state laws that may currently hinder the state's ability to gain preference to receive grants through the federal plan.

While many of my Senate colleagues and I strongly disagree with the federal government's philosophy of trying to spend away our country's economic woes, Missouri will vie for the federal stimulus package dollars and use it to create more jobs and to enhance our state's infrastructure. Most Missouri lawmakers are very cognizant that it is one-time money — not for recurring expenses — and that it's the General Assembly's job to ensure that we don't waste taxpayers' money by becoming dependent on money that won't be there in the future or by creating new programs or services that we can't support.

Senate Leader Charlie Shields of St. Joseph appointed the 13-member Senate committee and chose us for our specific knowledge and our district's relationship with the 13 primary areas of federal government: agriculture, commerce, defense, education, energy, health, housing and urban development, justice, labor, science, transportation, veteran's affairs, and the interior (conservation and natural resources) — the latter my area of focus. During our first meeting, we heard from officials from the National Council on State Legislators who offered us more insight into what is happening at the federal level. The panel also heard from Paul Wilson, the governor's senior counsel on budget and finance.

As the committee continues to meet in the coming days, we will continue to work closely with and receive daily updates from our federal delegation of legislators. As you may be aware, the U.S. House approved its proposed \$800 billion-plus stimulus bill, known as the "American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009," on Jan. 28. The proposed legislation is expected to be taken up by the U.S. Senate during the first week of February and to reach the president's desk by mid-February.

While passage of a federal stimulus package is expected to draw substantial dollars to Missouri, the Legislature, working with the governor, will have to decide the best way to spend the money to stimulate the state's economy. I disagree with the governor's recently laid-out budget proposal, which hinges on more than \$800 million from federal bail-out money that we may or may not receive. This is a budget based on a one-time bailout and not a long-term plan. Instead, I believe we owe it to Missourians to continue to spend within our means as we pursue our major priorities of creating jobs, protecting taxpayers with no new taxes, helping all

Missourians find and afford health coverage, and preparing Missouri's workforce for the future, including making sure more students have the opportunity for education past high school.

Our nation's financial crisis is upon us, but Missouri lawmakers must look ahead and plan for the future and for what comes after any short-term federal stimulus dollars are spent. In Missouri, we will continue to lead by conservatism as we work to serve and protect Missouri taxpayers.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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