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## **Senate's 2020 Job Committee Focusing on State's Economic Future**

JEFFERSON CITY — The first major meeting of the [Senate's 2020 Jobs Committee](#), on which I am serving, was held in Kansas City on Sept. 30. The committee is working to create a long-range plan and develop a strategy for the state's job creation initiatives over the next decade. The committee's goals are to improve economic prosperity in our state, create new and high-paying jobs and encourage business development.

The meeting was very productive and informative as the seven-member committee asked questions of and listened to ideas from business owners, entrepreneurs and members of the business community for making Missouri more attractive to business — both now and in the future. Among the items discussed were tax policy and tax credits, particularly as they relate to small business — the backbone of our state's economy. Ninety-eight percent of our state's workforce is employed by 126,000 small businesses.

During this year's legislative session, the General Assembly passed a number of measures in [House Bill 191](#) to benefit and support small business, including the phasing out of the corporate franchise tax and the "*Big Government Get Off My Back Act*," which bans the increase in some user fees and prevent new regulations on companies with less than 25 employees over the next four years. As the committee seeks more input during additional committee meetings this fall — including ones at the University of Missouri-St. Louis in October and at the University of Missouri-Columbia in November — we will be listening carefully to the needs of the business community on both sides of the state and in rural areas to see what kind of legislation could benefit their efforts to make Missouri a more competitive player in the global marketplace.

Because education is a vital component to our economic success, the panel is also discussing the relationship between economic development and higher education. The work of another Senate panel — the [Senate Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee](#) — will also be instrumental in improving our state's economy by creating long-term plans and strategies for developing the best educated workforce possible — a key component of economic growth.

Recently, I took part in another important panel discussion as a member and co-chairman of the General Assembly's [Joint Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus and Stabilization Funds](#), which met Sept. 15. Because the true oversight committee for these funds was vetoed by the governor ([House Bill 544](#)), this committee will take on the expanded role of looking at how those stabilization funds are being spent in Missouri. One area of concern for several members of the committee, including myself, is whether the state's plans to use federal stabilization dollars to expand broadband Internet access to rural parts of Missouri is a duplication of effort by the state's existing broadband companies. We are also concerned that the project focuses more on the "middle mile" in broadband networks. The middle mile is the infrastructure pipeline for delivering Internet access, but is not the connection that runs to people's homes and businesses, which is known as the "last mile." The broadband project requires \$40 million in state matching funds, which were already appropriated by the state Legislature.

While the [Joint Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus and Stabilization Funds](#) was formed to serve only through January 2010, we intend to continue working, particularly since 75 percent of the federal stabilization funds have not been put to use yet and because there are more questions than answers regarding federal stabilization funding coming into our state.

As always, if you have any 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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