



Senator Kevin Engler

Capitol Report

Majority Floor Leader

3rd District

Senator Kevin Engler proudly represents the people of Carter, Iron, Reynolds, St. Francois, Ste. Genevieve, Washington counties and part of Jefferson County

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Week of May 4, 2009

Budget Completed Despite Challenges

When the federal government passed their misguided attempt at economic stimulus this February, it was already clear that Missouri's budget for the fiscal year 2010 was going to be a complicated one. Although the spending by Congress was ludicrous, they did it in such a way that states are forced to use the money or allow it to go to other parts of the country. Combine this influx of federal dollars with major disagreements with the House of Representatives over healthcare, and you get the problems we dealt with this week. The good news is that the budget was completed by the Legislature by the constitutional deadline, and it now heads to the governor's desk for his signature. The \$23 billion budget will go into effect on July 1.

The Senate completed work on our version of the budget three weeks ago, and throughout the conference committee process, we were largely able to hold the Senate position on many spending priorities. This includes an additional \$1 million for the Farmington Correctional Facility, an additional \$1 million for the Bonne Terre Correctional Facility, and an additional \$700,000 for the Potosi Correctional Facility. Another important line item in the budget maintains full funding for the Sexual Predator Unit in Farmington.

The House did reject one important measure to help needy Missourians. In the Senate, we approved a plan that would have expanded state-sponsored healthcare to 35,000 low-income individuals. The plan would not have cost the state a dime of general revenue, and

would have instead been funded through federal dollars and Missouri hospitals. It is unfortunate that the House chose to reject this plan in the appropriations bill, and it is my hope that we will be able to approve this program in another piece of legislation before the end of session.

We also worked on [House Bill 22](#) this week, another spending bill that contains appropriations for federal funds received through the federal bail out measure passed in February. We are working to scale down the massive spending contained in the HB22. The legislation is filled with pork, and we need to make sure taxpayers get the best bang for their buck with these dollars.

Earlier this week, we worked on advancing several bills through the legislative process. This included [House Bill 246](#), which addresses a problem with streams in our area. In the southern part of our state, a gravel problem exists that is having a detrimental effect on the environment and stream banks. The bill allows landowners to remove gravel from the streams without a permit for this purpose. The bill is currently in conference committee.

[Senate Bill 235](#) was passed by the Legislature this week. The bill contains a provision that would fairly tax sawmills as agricultural property rather than commercial property. Currently, the timber industry is regulated by the Department of Agriculture but sawmills are taxed like any shopping center or strip mall which is significantly more than what agricultural property is taxed. Our region's sawmill industry has been struggling, especially in light of the national construction downturn. This provision should help ease the pain on this industry which is extremely important to the Parkland.

With only one week left in the regular session, much more work is sure to get done in the final days. I'll continue to keep you posted as we pass legislation to improve our state.

If you are planning a trip to Jefferson City in the near future, do not hesitate to contact my office. You may reach me at 573-751-3455, send your e-mails to kevin.engler@senate.mo.gov or write to me at the Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Room 331, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

If you know anyone who would like to receive these updates electronically, please [send me](#) an email.

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