



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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## Deadline Nears on State Budget

The Missouri Constitution requires that the Senate and House send to the governor a budget by 6 p.m. on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup>. Allocating taxpayer money for state programs and services is one of the most important functions of the Legislature. In fact, creating a state budget is the only duty that lawmakers are constitutionally required to complete.

This year's budget process has been one of the most interesting and disheartening—especially for fiscal conservatives—in recent memory. It seems the attitude in Washington of paying our bills with a credit card is seeping into the Capitol halls here in Jefferson City. With the influx of federal stimulus dollars into state coffers, a struggle is taking place between those who want to save for budget shortfalls and those who favor using stimulus funds to plug holes in our operating budget and to fund pet projects. It is not a secret that I stand on the side of saving as much as we can.

I could not, in good conscience, vote 'yes' on the majority of this year's budget bills, because unfortunately, we are using these temporary funds from Washington to supplement ongoing programs and projects—a slippery slope that will lead to disaster in the future. In the Senate's version of the budget, approximately \$943 million in bailout money would go to the \$23.2 billion operating budget.

I also voted 'no' this week on a supplemental spending bill (\$155.7 million) that allocates some stimulus money for the remainder of 2009's budget, which runs through June 30, 2009, and voted a resounding 'no' on a \$2.6 billion stimulus supplemental spending bill for the 2010 budget. This was the largest single vote in terms of spending that I've taken in the last 10 years I've been a legislator. When we are unsure what the

economic situation will be like in the next few years, it doesn't seem prudent to spend like there's no tomorrow, nor should we participate in the federal government's ill-advised stimulus plan that is digging us an even deeper hole.

If you have any 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 e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.mo.gov](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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