



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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## Balancing Missouri's Budget: Where the Dollars are Spent

With the beginning of a new year, the Legislature is scheduled to reconvene in Jefferson City in a matter of days. The state budget promises to be the biggest issue of the 2010 legislative session so I thought it would be helpful to talk about where your hard-earned dollars are spent and fill you in on what is happening with the current budget.

It's important to know that during the 2009 legislative session, which ended last May, the Legislature approved a \$23.1 billion budget for fiscal year 2010 (began July 1, 2009, and runs through June 30, 2010). Of that amount, \$7.8 billion comes from the state's General Revenue (GR) fund, as discussed below. Missouri's GR fund is mainly financed by the collection of individual income taxes, corporate taxes and sales and use taxes. These funds are used to cover about a third of the overall state budget.

Another third of the budget comes from federal sources and the remaining third comes from state earmarks — taxes and fees that do not go into General Revenue, but into a specific fund. This sort of revenue includes tobacco taxes, lottery money, transportation taxes, and fees collected by the Departments of Natural Resources and Conservation for licenses.

Since federal funds and earmarked funds are typically designated for a particular purpose, most of the wrangling during the appropriations process is over dividing up the GR portion of the budget. It is this fund that lawmakers must decide how to divvy up most effectively and where cuts, if necessary, must be made.

Here is a breakdown of where your taxpayer dollars (taken from GR) are going in the current fiscal year:

- Elementary and Secondary Education: \$2.5 billion (31.5%)
- Social Services: \$1.5 billion (19.4%)
- Higher Education: \$921 million (11.8%)
- Judiciary, Public Safety and Corrections: \$867 million (11.1%)

- Health and Mental Health: \$842 million (10.8%)
- Employee Benefits: \$579 million (7.3%)
- All Other Agencies and Real Estate: \$436 million (5.6%)
- Public Debt: \$84 million (1.1%)
- Economic Development, Labor and Insurance: \$58 million (.74%)
- Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources: \$22 million (.28%)
- Desegregation Settlement: \$9 million (.12%)
- Transportation: \$8.3 million (.11%)

It is no secret that the lean economic times hitting the country have also fallen on the state of Missouri, forcing us to look for ways to keep our budget afloat. Missouri's constitution wisely requires that the budget be balanced each year (it is a tragedy that the same is not true of the federal government, which appears to be spending money as if there were no tomorrow). This requirement disciplines state lawmakers to pinch every penny and to make cuts when necessary. Next week, we'll look more in-depth at what cuts have been made and talk about what may lay ahead as the Legislature returns to Jefferson City to begin crafting a leaner, more streamlined budget.

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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