



# Frank Barnitz

State Senator — District 16



Column For Week of: March 9, 2009

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## Work on State Spending at Mid-Session

*Supplemental Spending Bill, Federal  
Stimulus Accountability Legislation Completed*

Next week, the Missouri Senate will adjourn for mid-session recess, officially marking the mid-point of the 2009 legislative session. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I am especially focused on funding for Missouri programs and services. Much of the Senate's direct work on the state's spending plan will take place after the break, but we have made progress on legislation that will affect appropriations for this and the coming fiscal year during the first 10 weeks of session.

This week, the Senate passed [House Bill 14](#), a supplemental spending bill for fiscal year 2009. When creating the budget, we work with the most up-to-date numbers we have in order to come up with the closest possible estimates to appropriate funds to state programs. There are occasions when these numbers change as the year progresses or extraordinary expenditures occur. This is the reason why a supplemental budget bill is passed each year. The provisions of this bill address budget issues that were not passed or were not funded to the level of being sufficient for the whole year. Several important programs that citizens in Missouri depend on will be able to continue thanks to House Bill 14.

There has also been a lot of talk about the Federal Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 and how it might affect Missouri's budget. The president signed this bill in mid-February, and it contains billions of dollars in relief for all 50 states. Missouri is poised to receive at least \$4 billion in federal funding through multiple sources, including Medicaid reimbursements, infrastructure improvements, and education dollars. The governor has established a Transform Missouri website so that you can track what Missouri receives and how it is spent. This site also allows citizens to share their opinions on how stimulus dollars should be spent, and I encourage you to visit <http://transform.mo.gov/> so you can offer your comments.

The Transform Missouri site is just one way we are promoting accountability with the federal funding. This week, the Legislature completed work on the first bill approved by both chambers. [Senate Bill 313](#) is a bipartisan effort that creates two separate funds

within the state treasury to receive and retain funds provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Money the state receives from the temporary increase in Medicaid reimbursements, as well as any other funds that are awarded to supplement the payments to on-going programs will be deposited into the “Federal Budget Stabilization Fund,” while all other funds received under the act will be deposited into the “Federal Stimulus Fund.”

Details about federal funding continue to become available, and we are still learning about how the hundreds of pages of federal legislation will be implemented. However, there is one thing that I am absolutely sure of: The distribution of these funds must go to projects throughout Missouri that will bolster our entire state’s economy. Recently, Mayor Francis Slay blasted a project announced to fix an ailing bridge in Tuscumbia, saying that more funds need to be spent in St. Louis. I was outraged he would suggest that outstate Missouri was somehow less important than his area, and I will continue to make sure that the projects and programs in rural Missouri are addressed—now and in the future.

The appropriations process will continue when the House budget bills arrive in the Senate. At that time, my colleagues and I on the Senate Appropriations Committee will amend the budget bills in a way that reflects our budget priorities and revenue information. Once approved by the Senate, differences are ironed out through the conference committee process. When the House and Senate agree on a final plan, it is sent to the governor. The General Assembly’s constitutional deadline for completion of the state operating budget is one week before the end of the legislative session. I will continue to let you know the progress we make as the budget process continues.

### **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to call me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2108. You can also write to the address listed below.

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