



Senator Luann Ridgeway – Serving Clay County

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Senator Luann Ridgeway Capitol Report May 11, 2009

As this session of the 2009 Legislative Session winds down, it will be thought of as a session of roller coaster rides up and down --- every day brought sudden changes in different directions. The session started with a forecast of over an \$800 million deficit in our state budget.

Then glides in the Christmas sleigh without Santa Claus, but with the red, white and blue suit of Uncle Sam bringing billions of dollars worth of presents for all the good states of America to help with their wish lists. It doesn't matter that Uncle Sam doesn't have the money, but had to print it or borrow it from China and other countries that don't really like us --- never-the-less, it still spends like real money.

It is almost like Uncle Sam wants the states of America to have the same spending and deficit problems as our federal government. (Rarely does a drunk like to drink alone.) Instead of a balanced budget, spending what you have and living within your means, the federal government wants to turn the states into fifty little federal governments that overspend and pile more and more debt upon the next generation of American kids. This will do nothing more than make our states more dependent upon the federal government and its string-tied money and make the state legislatures less and less in control of state issues.

When I was young, my mom and dad tried to keep me away from people that had bad habits, because the bad habits could wear off and have negative effects on my upbringing. Our state government has been in partnership with the federal government almost since our birth as a state. The founders of our state wisely put the requirement for a balanced budget in our state constitution. My grandma used to say, "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are."

The problem with being in partnership with the federal government is that we will never be able to keep up with them in spending, because we have to pay our bills ourselves every year and are unable to pass these bills on to our children and other generations to pay.

What I have found is that when government comes in and shows compassion upon one special interest, it is at the expense of other special interests as well as the taxpayers. And remember, Government only shows compassion with money. That's our money or money borrowed that our children will have to pay back. One example of this federal spending spree is a \$550,000 earmark for aquaculture that is in the Federal Stimulus bill and is earmarked to the state of Missouri.

If you remember a year ago, high feed prices put a burden on all of our farmers across the state. A contributing factor to this was the favoritism our government showed toward corn growers by passing an ethanol mandate. This government policy helped one segment of agriculture but hurt agriculture as a whole. And it drove food prices up as well

These stimulus funds are earmarked to go to the seventy aqua-farmers across the state and are described to help these farmers recover from the high feeds costs of 2007-08. What about the dairy farmer, the beef farmer, the pig, horse, goat, chicken and turkey farmers that were hurt by these policies? Their tax dollars are being used to lift up another special interest group at the expense of others.

This is a great example of having a lobbyist in place at the right time to talk to the right politician to get a special favor for a special industry at the expense of the taxpayers as a whole.

The real role of government is to set the rules for everyone to compete on a level playing field and allow everyone to compete in the free market system --- not to pick winners and losers based upon who has the best lobbyist.

I did find one program in the federal bill that is paid for by the taxpayer that truly is pork. In the budget is \$200,000 to eliminate the feral pigs in the state of Missouri. At least this is the type of pork a person can get their hands on.

As always, Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2547. You may write to me at Senator Luann Ridgeway; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: luann.ridgeway@senate.mo.gov

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