



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# 44<sup>th</sup> President

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JEFFERSON CITY – I think when folks look back on this week years from now, almost everyone will remember where they were or what they were doing when Barak Obama was sworn in as our nation’s 44<sup>th</sup> President. I had the good fortune to be able to make the trip to our nation’s Capitol to witness the presidential inauguration first hand, and it is something I will never forget.

Those who watched the inauguration on television probably were amazed at the enormous crowd that gathered in Washington, D.C. to participate in this historic event, and it was no less amazing standing in that crowd of more than a million Americans. Despite the long lines, the crowding and the icy winds, everyone seemed to be in a great mood as they anticipated the swearing in of our country’s first African-American president. I spoke to a lot of older people who never dreamed that they would live to see this day, and saw the excitement in the faces of all of the young people as they watched history being made.

President Obama’s Inaugural Address was different in tone and style than many previous speeches delivered from the steps of the Capitol. Typically, inauguration speeches are filled with lofty ideas and soaring rhetoric, but the tough times facing our country called for something different this year. Although the president’s speech was a lot more somber than usual, I think it was grounded in the reality that too many folks have lost their jobs, that too many people have lost their retirement savings, and too many people don’t have access to health care services.

“The question we ask today is not whether our government is too big or too small, but whether it works – whether it helps families find jobs at a decent wage, care they can afford, a retirement that is dignified,” Obama said.

The huge economic stimulus package the president and Congress are putting together is designed to help folks who are hurting right now, unlike previous stimulus bills that mostly benefitted the wealthy. "...a nation cannot prosper long when it favors only the prosperous," Obama said.

I was also pleased to hear the new president call on all of us to work together to meet the challenges our country faces today. Folks in northeast Missouri know the value of hard work and helping their neighbors in times of need.

"For as much as government can do and must do, it is ultimately the faith and determination of the American people upon which this nation relies. It is the kindness to take in a stranger when the levees break, the selflessness of workers who would rather cut their hours than see a friend lose their job which sees us through our darkest hours. It is the firefighter's courage to storm a stairway filled with smoke, but also a parent's willingness to nurture a child, that finally decides our fate," Obama said.

So we enter this "new era of responsibility" with a renewed sense of optimism that change is not only possible but achievable if we all roll up our sleeves and get to work, to "begin again the work of remaking America."

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at [wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov), or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.