



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **State Senator Wes Shoemyer – 18<sup>th</sup> District**

State Capitol – Room 434  
201 West Capital Avenue  
Jefferson City, MO 65101-6806  
Phone: (573) 751-7852

**For Immediate Release: February 13, 2009**

### **SEN. SHOEMYER PLEASED WITH PARTIAL RESTORATION OF FUNDING FOR MEXICO PLANT SCIENCE CENTER & PERSHING HALL AT TRUMAN STATE UNIVERSITY**

JEFFERSON CITY – Senator Wes Shoemyer, D-Clarence, today expressed relief that Governor Nixon has included funding for construction of the University of Missouri Plant Science Center in Mexico and renovations to Pershing Hall at Truman State University in Kirksville in the list of projects to be funded by the sale of MOHELA assets. The governor had previously announced that a number of projects would be postponed or eliminated due to the inability of the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) to meet its quarterly payments to the state as required by a 2007 law promoted by the Blunt administration.

Last week Sen. Shoemyer asked all interested parties to meet in his Capitol office to try to find a way to preserve these projects. Those attending included Dustin Allison, Governor Nixon’s Deputy Chief of Staff, acting Department of Economic Development Director Linda Martinez, Agriculture Department Director Dr. John Hagler and his legislative liaison Rachel Mobley, Dale Ludwig, President of the Missouri Soybean Association, Ryan Schmidt, President of Soy Labs, Mexico City Manager Todd Thompson and Asst. City Manager Russell Runge, Kelly Gillespie, Executive Director of the Missouri Biotechnology Association, and Molly Tallarico with University of Missouri Government Relations. The group met for several hours and pledged to continue to work on finding funding for the projects.

“Governor Nixon says job creation is his top priority in these tough economic times, and these projects will create a lot of good-paying jobs,” Sen. Shoemyer said. “We all agreed to work together to find a way to make sure these job creation projects get off the ground, and I want to thank the new administration for its willingness to try to find a compromise that will benefit the communities of Mexico and Kirksville.”

Today Governor Nixon announced that his administration had completed a review of the MOHELA project list, which he said was necessary because MOHELA had failed to make its payments to the state. Of the projects proposed by the previous administration, Governor Nixon says 18 projects will be funded now and 12 others will be funded when MOHELA makes payments to the state or additional funding sources can be found. The project list released today includes \$2.5-million for the University of Missouri Plant Sciences Building in Mexico and \$10-million for renovations to Pershing Hall at Truman State University in Kirksville. The figures represent a partial restoration of the funding for the projects.

-MORE-

The Blunt administration engineered the sale of \$350-million in assets from MOHELA in 2007. Sen. Shoemyer opposed this effort, expressing fears that money for the projects would fail to materialize, just as money ran out for many of the projects promised to communities in the 15-year highway plan. Sen. Shoemyer also objected to the MOHELA asset sale on the grounds that it would hamper the student loan agency's ability to provide low-cost loans to students, which is why the legislature created the agency in the first place. The senator ended a filibuster against the plan only after receiving assurances that several projects in northeast Missouri would be funded under the plan.

Of the \$350-million promised by the Blunt administration for campus construction projects, the state has received just \$240-million from MOHELA, leaving a \$108-million shortfall.

"I know Governor Nixon has had to make some tough decisions in trying to salvage a plan that he opposed for many of the same reasons I objected to it," Sen. Shoemyer said. "A lot of these campus construction projects are being postponed or eliminated because the money is just not there. During our meeting last week, we were able to show the Nixon administration that the projects in Mexico and Kirksville would create good-paying jobs, and they agreed that they were important projects that should continue if we could find a way to pay for them."

The projects that are being suspended until MOHELA makes additional payments to the state or alternative sources of funding can be found include the University of Missouri – Greenley Learning & Discovery Park in Novelty. Sen. Shoemyer remains hopeful the Knox County project will eventually be funded.

"I appreciate everyone coming together to try to make sure these important projects go forward, because the best thing we can do right now to help families who are hurting is to find ways to create jobs to get our economy moving again," Sen. Shoemyer said.

###