



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Beginning of the End

JEFFERSON CITY – We’re beginning to see a little light at the end of the tunnel as we head into the final week of the legislative session. At this point there are so many balls in the air that it can be hard to keep track of everything that’s going on, which is why I rely on my crack staff to help me follow all of the bills moving through the House and Senate. It’s not unusual to see a flurry of activity in the final weeks of session as members scramble to try to get their legislative priorities passed. That May 15th deadline always seems to help focus the mind and forces us to concentrate on truly important matters rather than some of the silly bills that occasionally make it to the floor for debate.

I am worried that we are running out of time to pass a jobs bill. The House passed a good jobs bill back in February, but several senators have done everything they can to kill it because they want use the same bill to reform our tax credit system. I think we do need to take a long look at all of the tax credits the state issues, but I don’t think that should be used as an excuse to kill a jobs bill when so many Missouri families are hurting right now. Folks back home are worried about keeping their jobs or finding new jobs. They are worried about trying to provide health care for their families, and they are trying to figure out how to send their kids to college when the price of tuition continues to rise faster than inflation. I don’t think they care whether we name a new state squash or rename some section of highway after some local celebrity.

The legislature managed to approve the \$23-billion state budget for Fiscal Year 2010 by the constitutionally-mandated deadline of Friday, May 6. Of that amount, the legislature gets to allocate about \$8.8-billion in General Revenue for all of the state agencies and

programs it funds. I wasn't sure if we would get it done on time this year because the House kept flip-flopping on what it wanted in the budget. There are several projects in the 2010 budget which will benefit the 18th Senate District.

For example, the budget includes funding for three projects in northeast Missouri that were originally going to be funded through the sale of MOHELA assets until the student loan agency quit making quarterly payments to the state. The 2010 budget provides \$10.22-million for the renovation of Pershing Hall at Truman State University in Kirksville, \$1.86-million for the purchase of equipment for the Greenley Learning and Discovery Park at Novelty, and \$2.5-million for construction of a plant science research center in Mexico. I'm glad these important projects will finally begin to move forward.

The 2010 budget also includes \$5.25-million for vocational education facilities in Kirksville, \$2.25-million for vocational education facilities in Pike County, and \$846,580 to replace the roof at the Mexico Veterans' Home.

The last week of the session is always the busiest, and this year promises to be no different. We've sent about 70 bills to the governor to be signed into law out of the 3,000 or so bills and resolutions filed in the House and Senate this year, so the pressure is on for lawmakers to try to get their legislation tacked on to anything that moves in either chamber. You really have to be on your toes to follow the action and to make responsible votes when the time comes. Like I said, I really count on Ian and Stacy and our interns Meagan and Mark to help me keep up with all of the activity in the final weeks of the session. They are kind of the unsung heroes in this process, and I just want them to know how grateful I am for their help.

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, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.