



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
Week of November 9, 2009**

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# Budget Matters

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JEFFERSON CITY – I have mentioned in previous columns that the biggest issue we will face during the upcoming legislative session will be the state budget. It's always a tough job putting together a balanced budget, a process that begins in December and ends one week before the General Assembly wraps up its session in May. The budget process will be especially difficult next year because state revenues continue to fall. Just last month state revenue collections dropped 14 percent compared to October of 2008. Since the fiscal year began July 1, state revenue collections have dropped 10.8 percent. The economic downturn has contributed to a 24.4 percent decline in state sales taxes last month and unemployment is cited for the 8.6 percent drop in individual income taxes. Corporate and franchise taxes also were down 26.2 percent last month.

A few years ago, the Senate Appropriations Committee began holding public hearings on the state budget in early December, and that process will continue this year. Because of declining state revenues, every program and service funded by the state will be under close scrutiny next year. That's why I am encouraging agency directors, local government officials and anyone involved with a program that receives state support to attend the public budget hearings in December. The best way to ensure your agency or program continues to receive state support is to present your case to the Appropriations Committee. Testifying before the committee won't guarantee anything, but it can certainly help improve the chances that your agency or program will avoid the budget axe.

The Senate Appropriations Committee will hold public hearings on December 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> in Senate Committee Room 2 on the first floor of the Capitol building. The hearing on December 7<sup>th</sup> begins at noon and the hearing on the 8<sup>th</sup> gets underway at 8 am.

Due to a limited amount of time, folks interested in testifying on the state budget should contact the Appropriations Staff toll free at 866-475-6083 or e-mail at [public.testimony@senate.mo.gov](mailto:public.testimony@senate.mo.gov) by December 1, 2009. You will need to provide the testifier's name, organization, if any, and the subject matter. Testimony will be limited to three minutes and a written copy of the testimony is recommended. One witness per organization will be allowed to testify before the committee. To see which state agencies and departments will be presenting information to the Appropriations Committee, visit <http://www.senate.mo.gov/hearingsschedule/hrings.htm>.

I also want to remind Missouri seniors aged 65 and older, people under 65 years of age with certain disabilities, and anyone with permanent kidney damage requiring dialysis or a kidney transplant that the official “open enrollment” period for Medicare begins November 15 and ends December 31. It’s important that our seniors and disabled citizens review their health care plans before the open enrollment period. It’s also important for folks to remember that under some Medicare Advantage plans, you can only see doctors who belong to that particular plan or go to certain hospitals for services, so it’s important to make sure your doctor or your hospital is part of the network when considering a Medicare Advantage plan.

If you would like to compare your health care plan choices, you can visit [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) and click on “Compare Health Plans and Medigap Policies in Your Area” or “Compare Medicare Prescription Drug Plans.” You can also do so by calling 1-800-633-4227 (TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048).

Finally, I hope folks who enjoy hunting remember to think of safety first. The firearms deer season began November 14 and runs through Tuesday, November 24. State conservation officials say hunters in Missouri took 237,253 deer last year and say this fall's harvest should be just as good. If you are fortunate enough to bag a deer but the family just won’t eat venison no matter how you prepare it, the Share the Harvest program provides a way for hunters to donate much needed meat protein to needy Missourians. The program is administered by the Missouri Department of Conservation in conjunction with the Conservation Federation of Missouri. For a list of local processors who participate in the Share the Harvest program, visit <http://www.mdc.mo.gov/cgi-bin/share/harvest.cgi>.

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.