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Weekly Capitol Review
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Legislative Highlights from the Missouri Senate – Week of April 13, 2009

With only four weeks remaining in this legislative session, we still have many bills to debate and much work to do before the General Assembly adjourns on May 15.

Some of the most important legislation of this and every session deals with the state budget. Each year, the General Assembly comes together in an effort to balance the money flowing in and out of the state from such sources as taxes, fees and federal resources to fund state programs, education, health care, transportation and many other issues.

The state budget is similar to your household budget, much like balancing a giant checkbook for over five million Missourians. This daunting task requires literally hundreds of hours of discussion, comparison, calculation, and compassion as we undertake the difficult task of deciding where to increase or decrease state funding.

This year, the state budget will include funds from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, more commonly known as the Federal Stimulus Program. We must be extremely careful how we fund projects with this money, simply because when the act expires, we must be ready to take up the slack from the temporary federal money.

Now that the budget bills have cleared the Senate, they move on to Conference Committees. By law, the budget bills must be truly agreed to and finally passed by May 8 of this year.

What happens to all of the bills once they're filed? Will they all simply pass or fail? I hear this question a lot. At this point in the session, many legislative bills are still being heard in various committees. Some bills will stall there, and never be taken up on the floor for passage. Some may be combined with other bills as amendments, and still others have companion, or similar bills that originated in the House. The General Assembly considers a great deal of legislation in any given year, so it goes without saying that many bills proposed this session will not make it into law. However, some bills appear year after year in hopes of passage, and

eventually get their due process.

I sponsored [Senate Bill 202](#), which inadvertently falls into these categories. The bill seeks to remove the assignment of fault of a motorcycle driver to an insurance company simply because he or she is driving a motorcycle. During debate, an amendment was successfully added that seeks to repeal the law requiring those over 21 to wear helmets. The controversial helmet legislation has been passed back and forth in the senate for several years, and some would say it is closer than ever to passage. We now await its return from the House Rules Committee.

On a lighter note, Coach Mike Anderson and the Mizzou basketball team visited the Capitol last week, celebrating a record 31 wins as Big 12 tournament champions. Coach Anderson spoke to the Senate from the dais about the team, its direction and focus for the future. Several senators took the floor to thank the coach for a great season and for bringing Missouri sports to fans all across the country.

For more information on the Missouri Legislature, Senate Communications produces a weekly column covering Senate action throughout the legislative session. To read about other important Missouri legislation, visit www.senate.mo.gov and click on Senate Newsroom. Here you can read about events in the Missouri Senate, and subscribe to this excellent resource for weekly updates in your email.

As always, should you have any questions or concerns about these or any other issues involving the Missouri Legislature, feel free to contact my office.

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