



Senator
Bill Stouffer

DISTRICT 21

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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The Stouffer Report: University Extension Faces Potential Budget Cuts

The word “cut” is being used quite a bit around the Capitol. And it seems everybody has his or her own idea of where cuts should be applied to the state budget. But there is one area where cuts are being proposed that does not rest well with me.

In order to achieve a balanced budget, the governor is proposing to take money away from the [University of Missouri Extension](#) program. His cut would mean about a 50 percent drop in funding to the program, or roughly \$14.6 million dollars less in Fiscal Year 2010. This does not include the money University Extension gets from grants and other sources, which can total as much as \$40 million a year. Even though the Extension gets the majority of its money from federal grants, cutting off its state supply seems like an ill-advised move.

The Extension program is just that: the method the university uses to bring its services and information to the entire state. The folks there handle economic development projects, emergency relief, agriculture research and other services. Granted, Extension must continue to reform as society has changed significantly since its inception, but it still does an excellent job to improve lives in every county of the state.

And, calling this a true “cut” is not completely accurate. The governor’s budget actually takes the \$14.6 million that would be taken away from University Extension and be put into a new program that is aimed at growing the number of health care graduates. The governor’s office says the health education program, which is being called [Caring for Missourians](#), would get a \$9.5 million increase in university funding. Then, the university could re-direct the money to Extension, if they chose to do so.

The Extension program has so many offerings and does so much good for so many people. The kids who take part in [4-H](#), which receives help from the University Extension, will be the ones who get hurt in all this. Roughly one in 10 children are involved in 4-H throughout Missouri. Studies show those who take part in extracurricular activities are 70 percent more likely to go to college. [University Extension's Business Development Program](#) helped Missouri business owners with training, management and start up counseling. This work created and retained over 11,000 jobs and over \$600 million in sales and new contracts.

Why would anybody want to cut a program that has proven itself to be not only successful but necessary? University Extension goes back to the Civil War along with land grant college rules that were put together in 1862.

This year, we in the Legislature are taking a look at every program the state offers, and we want to do away with those that do not live up to expectations and help those that do. Believe me, University Extension is something that needs to be kept alive. And I plan to do everything I can to maintain this vital program.

I am growing restless with plans to end programs that enrich people's lives with a hand-up, not just another hand-out. I am not certain how much longer we can sustain funding for generation after generation of welfare and folks who make poor life choices. This is one of my greatest fears in government — we won't be able to provide basic needs for Missourians because no one will be willing to work to pay the bills.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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