



Senator
Bill Stouffer

DISTRICT 21

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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The Stouffer Report: Nixon Plans Cuts to Access Missouri

*Missouri Valley and Central Methodist Students
and Families Fear Higher Tuition Costs*

Some of the proposed higher education cuts may affect a relatively new program. While it would actually benefit some students, it would harm many others — especially those in rural Missouri.

In January, the governor presented his budget to the General Assembly. In his plan are cuts he would like to see made to a number of education programs in order to keep the Fiscal Year 2010 budget in balance. Among these cuts is [Access Missouri](#), which started its life in 2007. The program provides a simplified financial aid process and is needs-based. It is a great way for parents to offset the cost of sending their kids to college, whether it is a four-year, two-year, private or technical college. Access Missouri has proven itself in the short time it has been around.

The proposed change would cap the amount of Access Missouri money awarded to a student at \$2,850. Even though this would mean an increase to students going to a public institution, it would also translate into a decrease to those planning to attend a private college. Right now, kids who go to private colleges and get help from Access Missouri can receive up to \$4,600. If they go to a public university, the maximum is \$2,150. This is the same thing as a \$1,750 tax increase to families.

In presenting his proposal, the governor said funding education can be done in a “one size fits all” method. Being a needs-based program is what sets Access Missouri apart from anything else out there. In this case, the grant award is based on a student’s financial need. Financial aid professionals have designed maximum award amounts to cover 36 percent of the average tuition and fees at a four-year public institution

and 30 percent at a private, or independent, college. To me, this is what makes Access Missouri so great. It helps people to further their education, no matter the size or location of the school.

Now, the good news in all of this is, the budget address made by the governor is merely a blueprint. The Legislature then takes his ideas and works to see what will and will not work. That is what the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) is doing. They are meeting almost every day, listening to testimony from different state department heads and others, and forming the foundation for the next state budget. Our counterparts in the Missouri House are doing the same thing. Soon, there will be 13 bills that will comprise the budget for Missouri's next fiscal year. Usually, debate on these bills starts in late March.

To me, education is one of the most important things we in the General Assembly deal with. I pray we make the right decisions as we move through this tight budget year and create the best plan for the best use of taxpayers' money that we possibly can.

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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