




## The Stouffer Report: *Legislation Becomes Law*

The governor has finished what the Legislature started at the beginning of the year. He has signed over 100 of the bills he received and has vetoed nearly two dozen others.

First and foremost, lawmakers sent a balanced budget to the governor, which is required by the constitution. Because revenues have been less than what we thought they would be, the governor had to do some last-minute trimming, and there may be more to come. We in the Legislature started to make some tough decisions at the start of this year. More will have to be made in the next year or two. We face a delicate task of funding programs, cutting the budget for some programs or eliminating certain programs altogether. This is not easy, because once a government program comes into existence, folks expect it to continue. And, using federal money is not the answer. We used nearly \$1 billion to fill the gaps in this year's budget and have more "at the ready" for the 2011 budget. If the choice came down to using "stimulus" dollars or trimming services in order to weather the downturn, I would vote to trim.

On July 1<sup>st</sup>, the governor signed [House Bill 683](#), the omnibus transportation bill. This measure does a number of things, including eliminating the Transportation Inspector General position in the [Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight](#). This is a job that is no longer needed, since the [Missouri Department of Transportation](#) (MoDOT) made some changes during the previous administration and became much more accountable. House Bill 683 also lets you pay vehicle taxes at the dealership when you buy a new car or truck; makes changes to rules

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governing temporary license plates; and expands the range for folks to drive farm machinery without a commercial driver's license (CDL) from 50 to 150 miles from the farm. The measure also expands public-private partnerships for large road and bridge projects.

On July 9<sup>th</sup>, the governor signed this year's crime bill, [House Bill 62](#). Most of the provisions of this bill clean up old or outdated language and get our laws more in line with the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Some of Missouri's crime laws are at least 100 years old. Probably the most talked-about aspect of House Bill 62 is the banning of text messaging while driving for folks age 21 or younger. Reading and sending text messages while driving is one of the more dangerous things a person can do. And, unfortunately, it is our youngest drivers who do it. They do not have the experience behind the wheel the rest of us do, and they are letting electronic devices distract them from the task at hand while on the roads.

Among the final bills the governor signed was [Senate Bill 291](#), the comprehensive education bill, which he signed on July 13<sup>th</sup>. A major component of the bill will fix a glitch in school funding, which came about after voters approved Proposition A in November of 2008. The ballot measure dropped loss limits at casinos and gives the extra casino revenues to schools.

You can see a complete list of actions taken by the governor by logging onto the Missouri Senate's website, [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov), and clicking on [Governor's Action on Truly Agreed Bills](#). Lawmakers will return to Jefferson City in September for the annual veto session.

*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](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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