



The Stouffer Report: 4,620 Pennies

You may feel government spending in Washington, D.C., is out of control. How does the state budget compare?

The state's Fiscal Year 2010 operating budget totals \$23.1 billion. Since folks are not used to talking in billions of dollars every day, I decided to explain the Missouri budget using 4,620 pennies in a video I have posted on [YouTube](#).

In the video, each of the 4,620 pennies represents \$5 million of the state's total budget. To put it in perspective, when we returned the pennies to the bank, we were short \$15 million, or three pennies.

In 1990, Missouri's budget was around \$7.5 billion. In 2000, it was \$16.8 billion and for Fiscal Year 2009, we planned on enough state revenues to afford a \$22.4 billion budget.

As you can see in my video titled "[Missouri Budget in Pennies](#)," today's budget is over three times what it was only two decades ago. To make matters worse, there is currently a gap in the amount of money Missouri brought in versus what it is spending, and this gap is only getting worse. Today, that gap is filled by federal stimulus dollars — your tax dollars and borrowing — that we will stop receiving in 2012.

Unfortunately, these stimulus dollars have created a gap between what we are spending and the amount of money Missouri can afford. The state will have to use roughly \$725 million in federal stimulus funds to fill this gap caused by declines in state revenues, and much of this includes expansion of spending programs including

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welfare, not shovel-ready construction.

Neither political party is immune to out-of-control spending. In fact, Republicans have had a majority in the legislature since 2003. However, state government has typically been able to create surpluses in previous years. Without a two-party system I fear we would be in the same situation as other states that are basically broke.

This was the year to scale back spending like several Missourians have done in their own homes. For this reason, several legislators opposed portions of this year's budget bills. To balance the gap between what Missouri can afford and what Missouri is spending, I fear we have several tough decisions to make in the years to come.

Much of today's discussions regarding politics are not based on Republicans and Democrats or liberals and conservatives as in years past. Discussions around coffee shops, little league games and online seem to focus more on whether or not we want more or less government in our lives. The future of Missouri's budget should also center on these two options.

I encourage you to check out my video on the Missouri budget by going to the following website: <http://tinyurl.com/MObudgetinPennies>. All Missourians must realize that decisions we make now regarding the state's budget will affect our children and grandchildren and will have a ripple effect on all the generations to come.

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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