

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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2009 Legislative Session Begins

The first session of the 95th General Assembly began Jan. 7 as lawmakers returned to the State Capitol to begin a busy legislative year, which runs through May 15. On opening day, more than 150 pre-filed and new Senate bills were presented and now the process of deliberating and debating those bills and others begins as the Legislature also considers the state's spending plan for the next fiscal year.

The state budget is without a doubt the major focus of this session. As vice-chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee, it will be my task to work with other committee members to help craft a budget that considers the needs of our state's citizens while balancing revenue with spending. We know it's not going to be easy, given the nation's struggling economy, but Missouri is in better shape to weather the budgetary challenges than most states because we started the year with planned surpluses and savings.

As always, education is going to be a top priority of mine during the legislative year, and I'm pleased it will also be for the Senate as well. Newly elected Senate leader Charlie Shields of St. Joseph said in his speech on opening day that ensuring more Missourians have the opportunity for an educational experience beyond high school will be among the Senate's top three priorities. Creating more jobs and helping Missourians find and afford healthcare also top the year's legislative agenda.

I recently filed an education bill that I believe will benefit our students and teachers across the state. As many of you know, Missouri voters approved the voter-initiated Proposition A during the November election to direct more money to Missouri schools from casino revenues. The measure also removed loss limits. [Senate Bill 139](#) would direct those gaming revenues toward teacher salaries with any extra going toward early childhood development and district transportation costs.

Our teachers are the foundation of our schools, and sadly are among the lowest paid professionals. We need to reward their efforts to educate our children, and I believe this proposal will serve as the best investment of that education money.

I also filed a bill recently ([SB 143](#)) that would require the Missouri Department of Agriculture to require licensed grain dealers to document the cost difference between a grain's cash price and its futures price for every sales transaction of grain. The documentation would include an explanation of how the dealer determined the difference, with reports provided to the agriculture department at least once a month.

As many of you know, farmers in southeast Missouri and elsewhere across the country have seen occasions when there was a significant cost difference between cash prices and what future prices were for the same commodity on a given day. This measure will help farmers have a documented record and better understanding of the reasons for those disparities, which can be brought about by local supply and demand issues, economic volatility, and transportation and fuel costs.

I'll keep you updated throughout the session on the status of these priorities and all of my proposed legislation and look forward to your feedback as the year moves along.

Either contact me at my Capitol office at (573) 751-3859 or in my district office at (573) 624-2200. You can also keep up to date on all of this year's legislative action by visiting the Missouri Senate website at www.senate.mo.gov. You can also access my personal Senate website information at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

It's going to be a very busy year with many challenges, and I look forward to representing and working for you in Jefferson City.

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