

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



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## Legislative Session at Halfway Mark

The Missouri Senate adjourned March 12 for its annual mid-session recess and will return to the state Capitol on March 23 to begin the second half of the legislative session. It has been a very busy 10 weeks or so in Jefferson City, and I'm pleased to report much progress has already been made.

One of the General Assembly's important tasks was passing a bipartisan bill ([Senate Bill 313](#)) that creates two special accounts within the state treasury to place and track the estimated \$4 billion in federal economic stimulus funds coming to Missouri. The legislation was necessary for the state to accept any federal stimulus monies and it creates an accountability procedure required by the federal government for states to receive the one-time federal dollars. The bill, which becomes effective immediately upon the governor's signature, creates the "Federal Budget Stabilization Fund" to deposit money the state receives that is awarded to supplement payments to on-going programs and the "Federal Stimulus Fund" for all other funds received. The funds ensure that federal dollars being taken in aren't simply absorbed into the state's general revenue funds and provide an exact record of what is received and what is subsequently spent. (The receipt and distribution of those funds can be tracked at [www.auditor.mo.gov](http://www.auditor.mo.gov).)

As of the mid-session adjournment, 57 Senate bills have been passed by the Senate and sent to the House for consideration — 34 are consent bills (non-controversial bills) and 23 are regular bills. Forty House bills have been sent to the Senate for approval. Two of my proposed bills are among those that have passed in the Senate. [Senate Bill 265](#) would extend the collection of the statewide court automation fee until 2013, and [Senate Bill 263](#) modifies the membership and quorum requirements for the Seismic Safety Commission. Several of my other bills are making their way through the legislative process, including two important education bills — one that would create the Missouri Promise Scholarship Program to expand the number of state scholarships going to Missouri students and one

that would change the school funding formula to allow state education funds, including those derived by the passage of Proposition A, to flow more quickly and efficiently to Missouri students.

The Missouri state budget will remain a top priority when lawmakers return to the Capitol. As a member of the Appropriations Committee, I can assure you that the committee is working very diligently to craft a state budget that will work to balance revenue and expenditures during these tough economic times. Our decisions won't be easy, but we remain committed to the state operating within its means and to wisely and efficiently using the one-time federal stimulus funds for job creation and transportation, not for creating new programs or services that we can't support in the future.

In addition, lawmakers will also quickly resume debate over a comprehensive jobs bill ([Senate Bill 45](#)), which expands the Missouri Quality Jobs program and offers a variety of other business tax credit incentives in order to bolster the economy. Some senators are questioning the real number of jobs these tax credits produce and whether this is the right direction for stimulating the state's economy. The House has already passed similar legislation, and the Senate will likely spend many hours debating the bill's merits.

I look forward to the legislative work that remains ahead and will keep you posted on all major legislative developments.

As always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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