

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



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## Senate Advances Budget with Increase for Education

### *Three SE Missouri School District Likely to Get Reprieve on School Makeup Days*

With a constitutional deadline some three weeks away, the fiscal year 2010 budget was the primary order of business for the Missouri Senate in recent days. The Senate altered 12 of the 13 budget bills approved by the House, which will likely be sent to a conference committee consisting of both Senate and House members to work out the differences between the two chambers. The conference committee then sends the negotiated version back to the House, and then to the Senate, for final approval.

The Senate's version of the 13 budget bills in total account for an approximately \$23.2 billion operating budget for the upcoming 2010 fiscal year, which runs July 1, 2009, through June 30, 2010.

Education funding was one of the Senate's priorities, with a \$63 million increase for the K-12 public school foundation formula, as well as a \$60 million increase in one-time funding to Missouri's four-year colleges and universities. Health care coverage was another focus as the Senate set aside nearly \$147 million to provide health insurance to the uninsured.

The General Assembly is constitutionally required to pass the budget this year by 6 p.m., Friday, May 8.

In other legislative action recently, an education bill I sponsored that would change the school funding formula so that money received from the passage of Proposition A last November by Missouri voters will go to students in Missouri classrooms received final approval by the Senate. It now goes to the Missouri House for equal consideration.

[Senate Bill 453](#) would fix an error in the proposition language so additional money generated by the removal of loss limits for casinos would be distributed more effectively and efficiently to school districts through the existing Classroom Trust Fund — a proven method to ensure gaming revenues get to the classroom. Because of these new funds, the bill proposes to remove the current 5 percent growth cap on school funding and adds a component for gifted students. The proposals are also included in Senate's recently passed comprehensive education bill ([Senate Bill 291](#)).

I also have good news regarding school make-up days for three school districts in southeast Missouri that missed more than two weeks of school during the snow and ice

storms in January. The House recently passed [House Bill 682](#) that would allow the school districts of Malden, Kennett, and Senath-Hornersville to make up only 10 days as a result of lost days during the winter storm. Under current law, schools are required to make up the first six days of school lost due to inclement weather and half of the additional lost days in excess of the first six. The Senate Education Committee has endorsed the proposed measure, and it looks like the bill will easily pass the Senate. Creating the bill was necessary to avoid problems that would be caused by having to make up several weeks of school and have students attend school well into the summer.

With just four weeks left to go in the legislative session, activity in the state Capitol reaches a peak at about this time. I'll keep you posted as action is taken on the issues and concerns that matter to you.

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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Capitol Office	Website:	Phone Number:
State Capitol Building	<a href="http://www.senate.mo.gov/mayer">http://www.senate.mo.gov/mayer</a>	877.291-5584
Room 422		<b>Fax:</b>
Jefferson City, MO 65101		573.526.1384