

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



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SE Missouri Projects Poised for State Funding

Many of you are aware that I serve as vice-chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee and serve on the appropriations conference committee consisting of five Senate members and five House members selected to negotiate budget allocations and determine how the proposed state budget will be spent on the critical functions of state government.

As you can imagine, this process is a balancing act as the committee weighs rural and urban issues, Democratic and Republican priorities, and all the other difficulties of reaching agreement on the budget.

Beginning May 4, the committee's budget proposals head to the Senate and House chambers for debate, and following the May 8 deadline for approval, will be sent to the governor for his consideration.

As the final budget debate gets underway, I am very pleased that our \$63 million increase in the school Foundation Formula looks very promising and would mean more money for our Missouri schools and students, including those in southeast Missouri. Over the last several years, the General Assembly has succeeded in approving increases for education each year and I am particularly pleased we were still able to do so during these challenging economic times.

During the budget negotiation process, I gave close attention to several southeast Missouri projects and priorities that I am delighted have received initial support and I hope will make it into the final version of the budget. They include:

- A proposed \$6.5 million increase to community colleges.
- Approximately \$5.3 million in proposed funding to the *Rebuild Missouri Schools Program* that I successfully advanced through the Legislature last year that will provide funding to repair extensive tornado damage at Caruthersville High School.
- A proposed and sustained budget of \$1.9 million for alternatives to abortion funding.
- A restored cut of \$81,468 and to maintain three full-time employees for the Poplar Bluff Health Lab.
- And, a proposed \$1 million budget for the Missouri's AHEC (Area Health Education Centers), which includes the SEMO AHEC.

Time is ticking, with the Legislative session still in full swing until the final moments

when the session ends at 6 p.m. on May 15. I will keep you updated on the final outcome of the budget as well as other actions that will be of importance to my constituents in the 25th District.

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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