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State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties

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Counting Our Blessings with Thankfulness

Thanksgiving is a time when many of us take stock of our lives and what we are thankful for. While southeast Missourians endured a devastating storm earlier this year, saw our state and national economies decline, and perhaps experienced other personal challenges or hardships, including seeing loved ones sent to far-away places to fight for freedom, I know many of us will reflect on this year and remember an abundance of blessings.

While we live in a land of plenty, the downturn in the national economy has affected many American families. Since the origins of Thanksgiving are about "sharing the harvest," I hope many will consider contributing to local food pantries this season and helping out a friend or neighbor who may be in need. There are also many opportunities through local service organizations, and volunteers are always welcome and needed.

This Thanksgiving, I will give thanks for a wonderful family: my wife, Nancy, our three sons, our daughter-in-law, the rest of our family and for our many friends. "Family" is what Thanksgiving is all about, and I hope you and yours will enjoy each others' company — and time reconnecting — while taking a break from the ordinary pace of life.

Thanksgiving is also a time when we think about loved ones who are far away from us, including those who are serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. So while life goes on rather normally for the rest of us, I hope all of us will pause to remember — and give thanks for — the great sacrifices these men and women are making to ensure safety and freedom around the world.

Also this Thanksgiving, I will give thanks for the citizens of southeast Missouri, whom I am very proud to call my neighbors and friends. When our area of the state slowed to a crawl during the ice storm of last winter, the amazing response from our communities — who worked in cooperation with state and local authorities and power utilities and many others to help our area recover from the massive storm damage — served as another reminder to me of why I love to call this place home. Thanks to all who aided in that tremendous effort.

I am also thankful once again for the opportunity to serve another year as your state senator and to represent your interests and priorities in Jefferson City. I am also pleased to now have the privilege of serving as the Senate's Appropriation Chairman for the upcoming legislative session. Having served on the committee as vice-chairman for several years and as a long-time member of the appropriations conference committee that finalizes the details of the state budget, I am honored to serve in this high-ranking position — and I will do my best to ensure that our state continues to practice conservative fiscal responsibility, even during these challenging economic times, as we work to serve the people of our great state.

Wishing all of you a safe and happy Thanksgiving.

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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