

State Senator Robert Mayer

The Mayer Memo

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



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Budget Testimony, Pre-filing of Bills Prelude to the 2010 Legislative Session in Jefferson City

Much activity is underway at the state Capitol in Jefferson City this month as state lawmakers begin pre-filing bills for the 2010 legislative session. Also, the Senate Appropriations Committee will begin listening to public testimony regarding the state's annual budget.

On Dec. 1, the first day Missouri lawmakers are eligible to pre-introduce proposed legislation, I filed several bills and will file several more as the session gets underway. During this first wave of bill filings, I have offered bills ranging from school enrollment to county classifications to proposing a sales tax to fund local library districts. I will highlight those and many more in the coming weeks.

As I'm sure all of us are aware, this is going to be a very tough budget year as our state must deal with less-than-projected revenues brought on by the economic downturn. We must do our best to minimize the potential negative impact that this downturn will have on the state budget. As the recently named chairman of the Senate's Appropriation Committee, one of my major responsibilities during the upcoming legislative session will be to ensure our state continues to practice conservative fiscal responsibility — particularly during these challenging economic times — to ensure our state's future prosperity. This likely will mean some very difficult decisions will be made as we work to balance spending with revenues as required by our state constitution. I want to assure southeast Missourians that state lawmakers are committed to managing your taxpayer money without raising taxes and minimizing the loss of vital programs and services — and we will continue to exercise financial responsibility and restraint so we don't experience the financial crisis that is affecting many other states during this economic climate.

Here is a snapshot of our current budget situation: already, the governor has withheld or cut \$634 million in spending from the Fiscal Year 2010 budget. The 7.7 percent decline in state revenues reported at the end of November will make additional withholdings likely before the current budget year ends on June 30. This will also likely mean a reduction in state spending in the FY 2011 budget, which lawmakers begin drafting in January. Budget analysts must also consider the more than \$711 million in federal stabilization funding that will not be there after 2011.

Also, state lawmakers are keeping a close watch on the proposed federal health care reform in Washington, D.C., and are looking into how it will affect our state's budget in the future.

The Missouri General Assembly will convene in just a few short weeks, beginning at noon on Jan. 6. I am looking forward to continuing my work for the citizens of the 25th District and will keep you apprised of all major legislative developments. In the meantime, to access more information about the 2010 legislative session, I encourage you to visit my Senate web site at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer

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.

Capitol Office

State Capitol Building
Room 422
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:

<http://www.senate.mo.gov/mayer>

Phone Number:

877.291-5584

Fax:

573.526.1384

