

January 29, 2009



Senator Jack Goodman – Serving Barry, Lawrence, McDonald, Ozark, Stone and Taney Counties

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State of the State

This week, your lawmakers and other state officials gathered in the Capitol to hear Governor Nixon give his State of the State address, during which he announced his recommendations for the 2010 fiscal year budget and his funding priorities for Missouri. The governor's budget recommendations serve as a starting point as your Legislature goes to work crafting the state budget.

In his speech, the governor spoke of continuing and building upon many of the legislative successes of the past four years, such as creating new jobs and fully funding the education formula. The governor also said he shared our commitment to helping small businesses grow and provide jobs throughout Missouri.

Governor Nixon spoke of the need to balance the budget and continue to be fiscally responsible, even if it means making tough decisions. Fortunately, during the past few years, we made fiscally responsible decisions that allowed us to begin this budget year with a carryover surplus. Although times are difficult across our nation, Missouri's budget is actually in much better shape than most other states and we are better prepared to face the difficult road ahead. We will work together to make the difficult decisions required of us this year and operate within the revenue provided by Missouri's hard-working taxpayers.

Still, the question remains: How are we going to pay for all of the services hard-working Missourians depend on in their everyday lives? I was pleased to hear Governor Nixon pledge his agreement with the Legislature that raising taxes is not an option.

As I review the budget proposed by Governor Nixon, I am deeply concerned about its heavy dependence on funds from a federal economic stimulus plan that has not yet been passed by the United States Congress. Governor Nixon's budget includes more than eight hundred million dollars (\$800,000,000) in such hypothetical funds.

While it is likely that the federal government will pass legislation sending money to the various states, it is not a certainty. Beyond that, we do not know how much will come to Missouri and what strings may be attached. What if the plan does not pass as projected? What if Missouri does not receive as much in grant money as anticipated? What if we do not receive any money at all? What if receipt of the federal money is conditioned on passing legislation that is not consistent with the policy values of Missourians? It is difficult to justify planning our entire state budget around a one-time stimulus proposal about which we have so little information.

If we do ascertain enough specific information about this federal money to build some of it into the state budget, I believe these one-time funds must be spent responsibly. I am certainly not willing to spend this one-time money growing programs that we will be unable to continue funding on our own.

I am not convinced that the federal stimulus package is a good idea. However, that decision is being made by the federal government in Washington, D.C. As I work for you in Jefferson City, I will work to ensure that if the federal stimulus package is passed, Missourians will receive back as much of these taxpayer-funded dollars as possible and that these dollars are used as responsibly as possible.

In an effort to achieve this goal, Senate President Pro Tem Charlie Shields created the Senate Select Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus to study and analyze strategies for getting the maximum amount of dollars for Missouri from the stimulus package and using those dollars to bring the most advantage to Missourians. Sen. Shields appointed me to this select committee, and we began meeting this week.

In the coming weeks, the Senate Appropriations Committee will take a comprehensive look at the governor's recommendations and craft suggestions for the FY 2010 budget. Eventually, the committee's budget recommendations will be heard on the Senate floor. Despite any differences of opinion, I remain committed to working with others throughout this process to create a balanced budget that best serves Missourians.

As always, I welcome your ideas, questions and concerns about Missouri government. You may contact me at the Capitol as follows: (573) 751-2234, jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov or by writing to Senator Jack Goodman, Missouri

State Capitol, Room 331-A, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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