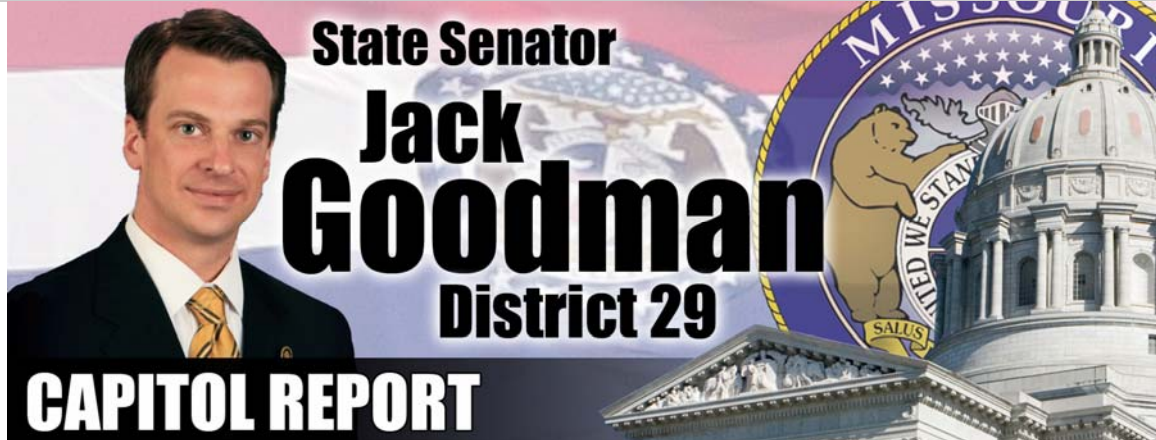


May 11, 2009



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

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## [Spending into Oblivion](#)

Each year, one of the most important duties of the Legislature is to carefully spend, for essential state programs and services, the money government takes from our families in the form of taxes. Last week, the Senate and House chambers were dominated by talk of the fiscal year 2010 budget as the constitutional deadline of 6 p.m., May 8 inched closer. Thursday evening (5/7), the Legislature passed a \$23 billion operating budget. This year has been unique because of the more than \$4 billion in federal “stimulus” money available for the state budget process.

Unfortunately, this extra money, which represents a long-term tax burden on generations of future Americans, ignited a budget struggle between those who wish to exercise fiscal prudence and those who want to spend it as quickly as possible on pet projects. You can almost see the smoke coming out of the suits in the Capitol as this federal taxpayer money burns holes in some lawmakers’ pockets.

In the budget process, I voted for the bills that were required to maintain the essential operation of government, although there were some components I did not entirely support.

I voted against House Bills 21 and 22. House Bill 21 contained nearly \$2.6 billion in spending mandated by the federal government in exchange for “stimulus” dollars. Rather than truly stimulating the economy and promoting a climate where Missourians can create jobs, this bill included chunks of taxpayer money for such ridiculous items as giveaways to fish farmers. While the bill did contain some worthy expenditures, the good was outweighed by inappropriate federal mandates. Furthermore, the federal government has not even created some of the regulations that will govern the use of this money. Certainly, it seems we should wait until we know all of the strings that will be attached to the money before we spend it.

Additionally, I was opposed to the bill because the debt created by the federal “stimulus” package will be a burden to be repaid by generations who are not even born yet. I am also concerned about the fiscal problems this will create for our state when this one-time federal money is gone. Unfortunately, the bill was passed by the Senate after long and heated debate.

In recent years, under careful and wise fiscal management, Missouri has successfully gone from huge budget shortfalls to huge budget surpluses by controlling the growth of spending. Some of the spending in HB 21 is misleadingly labeled as one-time expenditures, when it will actually create an expectation for ongoing spending among those receiving services. We should not allow the overgrown federal government to corrupt Missouri’s responsible fiscal restraint by bribing the state into excessive spending that can only have two possible results: (1) Missouri taxpayers will be called upon to fund the growth in government after the one-time federal money is gone, or (2) Missourians who have become dependent on overgrown programs will be cut when the one-time federal money is gone. The first option is irresponsible. The second option is just plain cruel, since we already know it is one-time money.

The budget process culminated in the discussion of HB 22, a discretionary (so-called) “stimulus” spending bill. HB 22 contained some legitimate government expenditures for needed infrastructure, maintenance and construction projects that, standing on their own, I support. Unfortunately, this bill, with a price tag of more than \$300 million, also became a package of pet pork projects that I could not condone.

We have more than two years to decide how to spend the federal “stimulus” dollars. Yet approximately 75 percent of it was rapidly spent last week. I support taking a more responsible approach, holding more back until we determine if state revenues will continue to decline in the next fiscal year. We need to be sure we can meet government’s obligations to its taxpayers and guard against any attempts to raise taxes, especially in bad economic times. I am concerned that, if the budget is too tight next year and this “stimulus” money has been squandered on pork, we will be faced with the prospect of failing to meet our obligations to taxpayers and some may take advantage of that opportunity to advocate for tax increases. Rest assured, I will not support raising job-destroying taxes, but I think we should be proactive in guarding against that situation.

I was also opposed to HB 22 because it includes \$50 million in giveaways to two private companies. While I support government policy that promotes job creation through creating strong infrastructure and an educated workforce, eliminating undue regulation and minimizing taxes, I do not believe it is appropriate for the Legislature to take money from taxpayers’ hard-earned paychecks and then select individual companies to receive those dollars. Additionally, there is no guarantee that jobs created by such an artificial manipulation of the free market will be sustainable after the one-time infusion of government money is gone. Unfortunately, HB 22 passed over my “no” vote as well.

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](mailto: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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