

Week of March 30, 2009



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A State Senator's Typical Day at the Capitol

When high-profile legislation comes up for debate on the Senate floor, you will often hear about it on the evening news or read about it the next day in the newspaper. However, many people do not realize that the majority of what we do as state senators on a day-to-day basis actually takes place outside the Senate chamber.

A typical day for me in Jefferson City consists of working on the state budget nearly every morning for a few hours as part of the Senate Appropriations Committee. This is an especially busy time for us, because the House just passed its version of the 2010 fiscal year budget last week, and the 13 budget bills are now in our committee for consideration. We are carefully combing through each bill to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent as responsibly as possible on the programs and services Missourians need most.

In the next few weeks, our version of the budget will be introduced on the Senate floor where it will be debated until we can reach a consensus. Then it will be sent back to the House for final approval. Any differences between the Senate and House will be ironed out in a conference committee. The General Assembly is constitutionally required to send the budget to the governor by May 8.

By the time the appropriations meeting is finished, it is typically time to go into session for the rest of the morning. This is the point where legislation is brought before the entire Senate, and lawmakers have an opportunity to voice their opinions on behalf of their constituents. Committee chairs also report on any activity in their committee, special guests are introduced and other announcements are made.

After morning session, I meet with constituents and various groups who are visiting

Jefferson City for the day, and then I attend more hearings on proposed pieces of legislation for my other committees.

Now that we are well into the second half of the legislative session, the Senate reconvenes for an afternoon/evening session on most days to continue working on bills. Sometimes we may not adjourn until late in the evening—or the early hours of the morning—if debate is particularly complicated or lengthy.

Over the course of the session, a few students from the district have taken the opportunity to come to the Capitol for a day as a “job shadow” to see what I do on a daily basis. They were able to experience the legislative process in action and see what it is really like to be a state senator in Missouri. This is a great learning opportunity for our students to witness first-hand their government at work and to learn a little bit more about public service. I encourage any student who is interested in job shadowing for a day at the Capitol to contact my office. My staff will be happy to give you more information.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. Because we are here to serve you, we look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senate District.

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