

Week of May 11, 2009



[Website](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

## [Legislature Passes \\$23.1 Billion Budget](#)

One of the most important duties of the Legislature each session is to allocate money for state programs, projects and services for the coming fiscal year. In fact, creating a budget is the only constitutionally required task lawmakers must complete every year by a certain deadline. Last Thursday, the Legislature passed a \$23.1 billion operating budget for fiscal year 2010 and sent it to the governor, along with allocating a considerable amount of Missouri's \$4 billion portion of the federal stimulus money.

As part of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I have experienced the budget process from start to finish firsthand. We have been working since the session began, first considering the governor's recommendations, and then debating and refining the budget bills until the Legislature reached a consensus on a state spending plan that will best serve the people of Missouri. Most importantly, we honored our commitment to be fiscally responsible. Despite the economic crisis, essential programs and services will continue to receive funding, primarily because of our state's prudent financial decision to live within our means in recent years.

This budget year has been one of the most complicated and challenging in recent memory, not just because of dropping revenue or a weakened economy, but because of the added element of federal stimulus dollars. In spite of my fundamental opposition to Washington's spending free-for-all disguised as an economic recovery plan, here in Missouri we reinvested these taxpayer dollars we received in projects and programs that will have a positive and lasting impact without a permanent price tag. It was crucial that we didn't spend ourselves into a hole that we could not dig ourselves out of when the money runs out in two years. Also, we were able to set aside nearly \$1 billion in reserves—an impressive feat considering that many other states are struggling to stay afloat.

Residents of the 31<sup>st</sup> Senatorial District will benefit from money set aside for local projects, including more than \$1.2 million for the Warrensburg Veterans' Home for the

construction of a solarium, a new chapel and the renovation of the existing chapel for conference room space. The budget also includes \$5 million for the Amtrak side rail project and nearly \$250,000 for the Regional Professional Development Center at the University of Central Missouri.

Once again, the Legislature showed its dedication to improving education in this state by fully funding the public school foundation formula, ensuring that every child has equal access to an excellent education. In this era of global competition, it is imperative that we provide our schools with the resources they need to successfully teach our children and prepare them for a college education, and eventually, a career. The skills and knowledge cultivated in our elementary and secondary schools forms a foundation that will determine each child's future. Because education is one of our most important investments, we provided an increase of \$63 million to our K-12 schools in addition to the necessary funding—without a tax increase.

Higher education is the natural extension of K-12 schooling, so we also provided a \$50 million increase to our public colleges and universities. This marks the fourth consecutive year we have increased higher education funding, and with every additional dollar we spend, more students will see college as a possibility.

On another note, one of the stimulus spending bills includes nearly \$500,000 for the state's Complete Count Committee, which is charged with publicizing the 2010 U.S. Census. Based on the projected results of the impending census, Missouri may be in danger of losing federal funding and one of its nine congressional seats in the U.S. House. However, this could simply be avoided if more Missourians fill out census forms. This additional funding will allow the committee to develop a state 2010 census website with links to the U.S. Census Bureau's website. It will also give the committee expanded resources to create promotional materials and advertising to make the public aware of the census. These extra funds may make all of the difference when census forms are collected next spring.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. 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 31<sup>st</sup> State Senate District.*

**-END-**

#### **Contact Information**

**Capitol Office**  
State Capitol Building  
Room 419  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Website:**  
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/pearce>

**Phone Number:**  
866.277.0882 (toll-free)  
573.751.2272

**Fax:**  
573.526.7381