



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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The Federal Stimulus Plan: Questions and Concerns

The president signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in mid-February, but as we continue our work through the budget process here in Missouri, we are still left with questions on how this funding will best help our state. If I had been a member of Congress I would have voted against this bill, nevertheless, I will attempt to do everything possible to make sure the dollars that come to Missouri are invested wisely and not wasted. There are a lot of ideas on how this funding could help us to create a balanced budget, but I am more concerned with the options we have with this funding and how we can retain our ongoing policy of fiscal responsibility.

As the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, my utmost concern is that Missouri's budget reflects the goals of the taxpayers—making sure state programs are meeting the most critical needs of our citizens while providing a fiscally responsible spending plan. Thus, I am concerned about some of the funding that Missouri has been promised through the federal plan. Every dollar that could come to Missouri seems to have strings attached, some of which use one-time funds for ongoing programs. This is not the fiscally responsible policy we have worked hard to adhere to.

We are continuing to learn about the federal plan. With hundreds of pages of provisions and stipulations in the bill, we are receiving conflicting information on exactly what flexibility we might have. A Senate committee has been working with the National Conference of State Legislatures to work through the bill and make sure that Missouri taxpayers are protected from irresponsible provisions that could put our state in a bind.

We must be careful not to expand government spending so taxpayers won't be left with a hefty bill when the bailout money runs dry.

The purpose of the federal stimulus money is to better our economy through job creation, and we will continue to look for ways to make sure one-time funding is applied to one-time projects that will meet this goal. Missouri's economy is facing many challenges, but we are looking to provide long-term solutions, not temporary fixes for these issues. Using the federal stimulus money to supplement long-term programs funded through general revenue would ensure that we will be facing similar problems in just a few years when the federal stimulus dollars stop and the expanded programs' added costs continue. I am not willing to put our state in a situation that pushes current problems on future generations.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*