



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



Room 423 - State Capitol Bldg. - Jefferson City, MO 65101 – Contact Barbara Mustoe Phone: (573) 751-2306

Week of March 23, 2009

Crafting the State Spending Plan

As the Senate Appropriations Committee chairman, much of my focus during the legislative session, especially as we enter into the second half of the session, is on the process of crafting the state's budget. The 13 bills that make up the state's spending plan reached the House floor this week, and the Senate Appropriations committee will begin crafting what will ultimately be our final version of the budget next week. Since we are essentially at a mid-point in the budget process, I wanted to go over some of my goals for this year, as well as review the process it takes to craft our state's spending plan.

While we have not yet received the House's version of the budget, the Senate Appropriations Committee has been working to create our own spending estimates and discuss our goals. This work formally begins each December, when we hold public hearing on state spending. I have, in past years, commended my colleagues for their bipartisan attitude throughout the budget process, and I have every confidence that this will be maintained as we continue our work in the Senate on the budget bills for fiscal year 2010, (which begins on July 1, 2009). Our work so far this year has proven that the members of the committee are dedicated to meeting the needs of Missourians in a fiscally responsible way.

This year, however, will be unlike previous years thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, a federal bill I have commented on several times in my previous columns. I have served on the Appropriations Committee since I began in the Senate in 2003, and we have never before faced a situation like the one presented to us this year. As I have said in the past, I am fundamentally against this act passed by Congress. Despite the damage already done by our federal lawmakers, we must look forward and make sure we use this funding in a way that is fiscally responsible and beneficial to our state. It is preferable to use temporary funding for one-time

projects; otherwise our state's fiscal situation will face difficulty down the road when the federal funding stops. We must remain accountable to the taxpayers, and this can be accomplished by making sure that this federal stimulus funding is received and utilized in a balanced, responsible way.

The budget needs to be approved by the House before the bills making up the budget move to the Senate Appropriations Committee. We will then amend the House budget plan to reflect the Senate spending plan—the priorities and needs we have been reviewing since November. This version of the budget will go before the full Senate, and once approved by the full Senate, any differences with the House's version are ironed out through the conference committee process. As chairman, I will be one of five senators to serve on every budget-related conference committee. Once the House and Senate agree on a final plan, it is sent to the governor. The General Assembly's constitutional deadline for completion of the state operating budget is one week before the constitutional end of the legislative session. This year, the constitutional deadline falls on May 8th, and I will continue to keep you informed on the progress of Missouri's budget in the weeks ahead.

– END –

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