



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of April 13, 2009

Future Sustainability for the State Spending Plan

This week, hundreds of citizens from throughout our state gathered on the south lawn of the Missouri State Capitol to express their concern and alarm about the bailouts and spending practices employed by the federal government. On Wednesday, a similar event was held in Joplin and other rallies took place across the country. These “tea party” events are reminiscent of the 1773 Boston Tea Party in which Americans showed their anger towards British colonial taxes. These events are particularly meaningful for me because this week the full Senate began to review the 2010 budget, which will go into effect on July 1, 2009. The actions taken by our federal government in recent months have only complicated the challenges we face to allocate funds for state programs and services in these economically difficult times, but I believe we have crafted a responsible spending plan that ensures a sustainable budget in the future.

The stimulus package and bailout policies implemented by the federal government create problems that could affect generations of Missourians. As we worked to craft the Senate’s version of the spending plan, I kept in mind that our children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren will be affected by the spending we do today with tomorrow’s tax dollars. I have made no secret of my opposition to the current federal policies and I believe that, with the printing press in Washington, D.C. running overtime, it is all but certain that our country will face a time of significant inflation. This will be a tax on the people of our country and our state as the value of the dollar declines and citizens have to pay more for necessary resources.

For these reasons, we have worked on a state level to do what the federal government failed to do—consider today’s budget in terms of our state’s future. The core spending plan (the portion of Missouri’s budget that is directly controlled by the state legislature) has been built without using any stabilization or stimulus dollars for mandatory budget obligations. The budget proposed this week is sustainable in the future with no requirements of future federal stabilization dollars. It can stand on its own, although I admit it would not be easy. While we are hoping that the state’s general revenue stream will rebound and that we might be able to avoid making serious and painful spending cuts, we have crafted a budget that would allow our state to function without these federal funds.

Our careful use of federal stabilization dollars is possible thanks to the passage and signing of Senate Bill 313, which creates a separate budget stabilization authority line. We are able to separate these federal dollars from general revenue so we know that there is no unsustainable co-mingling of funds. We can be confident that the budget we have created today will not put us in an impossible situation down the road.

The General Assembly’s constitutional deadline for completion of the state operating budget this year is May 8th. The weeks of discussion and debate that will follow in the House and Senate are sure to amend the numbers we have approved. I do know that we will keep this core goal of future sustainability at the forefront of our conversations and actions.

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