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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

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If you have ever seen the movie *Ground Hog Day*, you would remember that it is a movie about a news reporter who woke up every morning and relived the same day over and over again. It seems that this movie has come to life in our own time as we wake up every morning to news of more bailouts, bankruptcies, unemployment, and more ideas on how the government wants to spend our way to prosperity.

I am sure that, like me, you receive credit card offers in the mail every day. In order to keep finances in shape and under control, in my household those offers go from the mailbox to the trashcan. The State of Missouri now has its own credit card from the federal government and the plastic better be in good shape because it will be put to use.

One month ago the state was facing over \$800 million in budget shortfalls. State departments, colleges, and other departments that depend on state funding were looking at ways to trim up staffs and budgets in order to keep our state constitutional requirement of a balanced budget.

All of a sudden the State of Missouri along with every other state in the nation received the credit card offer of the century. We are now able to use the federal government's credit card with an expiration date of two years on it and a credit limit of \$4.4 billion. We as a state are being encouraged to follow the fiscal policy that the federal government is using by insanely borrowing money to operate and putting the debt on future generations.

Now the State of Missouri has the opportunity to become a smaller version of the federal government by spending more money than we have coming in. We have found the money to survive for two years and are able to act like good times are here again. In my committee, Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight, there are over \$250 million worth of new spending bills backed up on the committee calendar that have either had a hearing or are waiting to have a hearing.

I remember reading a pamphlet put out by Alcoholics Anonymous which stated that the first step to healing and recovering for the addict is admitting that there is a problem and that it is out of control. This has to be the first step our government takes. We have to admit that we have a problem, it is out of control, and we need to take the steps to heal our addiction.

My parents also told me not to run around with anyone who smoked and drank because someone with bad habits could get you in trouble or you could take up those bad habits yourself. As a state we must not take up the bad spending habits of our federal government. Our forefathers wrote the second amendment to protect the states and individuals from a tyrannical federal government, but they never envisioned a way for us to protect ourselves from a federal government that is fiscally incompetent.

That job will fall back on the General Assembly that is working through the budget process. We must be prudent and treat these funds from the federal government as what they are --- a one-time deal. Fixing a road or a bridge or winterizing and upkeep on buildings are good examples for uses for one-time funding, but we cannot use these funds for ongoing expenses and become a mini federal government that is financially out of control.

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. I can be reached in Jefferson City at (573)751-1882, e-mail to chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov or regular mail at Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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