

For Immediate Release
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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

The annual ritual of the spring legislative session that makes the “forgotten men and women” (taxpayers) feel scared and concerned and always makes the special interest groups nervous will be played out in the remaining few weeks of the regular legislative session.

As the budget process moves forward, I fully expect it will take more time than the regular session to agree on how to handle the \$4 billion in federal stimulus and stabilization money as well as the \$22 billion in our regular operating budget.

However, at this point I would not bet the farm on a majority of politicians doing the right thing for taxpayers. I have to tell you that I have been put in the position this week of fighting both my Republican and Democrat colleagues during budget committee deliberations as we voted on how to dole out your money on our newly-found federal credit card. Hopefully, they will come to their senses and realize the danger that comes with the federal credit card that was handed to every state in the union.

Another concern I have is that both the budget chairs in the House and in the Senate are term-limited with their terms ending after next year’s elections. What this does is set forth the situation where neither chairman will be here to deal with the shortfalls that our state most likely will have as a result of the actions of using the federal government credit card.

Although both chairmen do the best they can, I still find it hard to believe that the long-term viability of the state’s fiscal budget will be of the utmost concern. I think that this is one downturn in regard to term limits. It does take away the long-term thinking of what can happen to a state budget when that particular legislator is no longer in office.

The states have very little control as to how this money is spent when the only decision the state can make is whether or not to take the money. If the state does not appropriate the money, the debate will shift to whether or not the governor can take the funds without the General Assembly’s permission or if the General Assembly can send it back to the federal government.

It would be interesting to find out what percentage of the money received from the federal government is borrowed from China or some other country, printed by the federal money press, or is actual tax dollars. Since the federal government is operating at a deficit, it is safe to say that this is money we don't have and cannot afford to spend.

Our state government is no different than the federal government --- we cannot spend, borrow, and tax our way to prosperity. We are in a very difficult budget time as revenues continue to fall due to the ongoing national economic recession. In fact, if we do not get a handle on spending in this year's budget --- next year's budget cuts will be like we have not seen in many years.

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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