

*Nothing is politically right  
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion  
is the firmest friend of truth.*

## MISSOURI SENATE JEFFERSON CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 15, 2009

### **Senate Advances \$23.2 Billion State Operating Budget** ***Senate Supports \$63 Million Increase for K-12 Education***

JEFFERSON CITY - Approving funding to run critical functions of state government with an emphasis on improving education, the Missouri Senate today advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$23.2 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include a \$63 million increase for the school foundation formula, as well as a \$60 million increase in one-time funding to Missouri's four-year colleges and universities.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, handled the budget bills.

"We have continued our commitment to fully fund a new school funding formula that gives all our children an equal opportunity for a great education," Nodler said. "We added \$63 million without a tax increase, while increasing higher education funding to make sure more Missouri students can afford an educational experience past high school. This is the fourth year of meeting our promise to fund the new formula for K-12 students and our fourth year in a row to increase funding for higher education - this year by more than 5 percent."

The budget also allows funding of either a new program currently under consideration by the Legislature called Show-Me Health Coverage created in Senate Bill 306 or a basic expansion of health benefits to working parents. Nearly \$147 million is dedicated to fund one of the new health care programs. The plans would first cover 35,000 Missourians. The Show-Me Health Coverage plan would pay the premiums for health insurance for working parents who earn up to 50 percent the federal poverty level, or \$11,025 for a family of four. Nodler said the expansion can be made without a tax increase, as it relies on a new federal drawdown on existing tax dollars that currently pay hospitals for uninsured care.

The budget also continues funding for several health programs including \$1.5 million for Youth Tobacco Prevention and \$1.25 million for a MOHealthNet Partnership Technology Initiative that would mean electronic health records for participants. Electronic health records are shown to reduce medical errors, unanticipated prescription reactions, and costs.

The Senate also voted to slash \$300,000 from the state's retirement benefits division after learning that some MOSERS staff were paid that amount in bonuses, despite losses to employees' retirement funds. An additional \$300,000 in bonuses came to light following the Senate's initial cut.

Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, commended Nodler for his leadership.

"Sen. Nodler has worked to protect taxpayers in this tough economic climate," he said. "He has drafted a budget that invests in our students and protects our most vulnerable while making sure we use federal stimulus dollars in a responsible way the state can afford to sustain when those dollars run out."

Differences in the budget bills will now be debated by conference committees. Negotiated versions must return to the House before gaining Senate approval to advance to the governor. The budget must pass by 6 p.m., Friday, May 8, as required by the constitution.

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