

Column for the Week of January 18, 2010



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Missouri Lawmakers Return to Jefferson City

The Second Regular Session of the 95th General Assembly is officially underway. We were welcomed by the Senate President Pro Tem on Wednesday, January 6, 2010. And, the next four months could prove to be the most challenging any Missouri Legislature has faced.

Before we can do anything else, we need to tackle the budget. Already, we are looking at a nearly \$1 billion revenue shortfall for fiscal year 2011. The fiscal year 2011 budget will begin on July 1, 2010. The [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) began its work on the FY 2011 budget at the beginning of December. We are required, by law, to have a balanced budget on the governor's desk by 6 p.m. on Friday, May 7, 2010. Between now and then, we will work with the House on the different budget bills regarding how to best spend taxpayers' money in a fiscally-responsible manner.

Ethics reform is also a high-priority issue. [Senate Bill 577](#) has been introduced this year as a way to end "pay for play" tactics and keep special interests from controlling lawmakers who are seeking re-election. The measure would also create an Office of Independent Investigation within the [Missouri Ethics Commission](#). The more transparent we can make the process, the better, and I look forward to helping pass this bill on to the governor for his signature.

For the second year now, I plan to approach the issue of installing red light cameras in our state. Last year's bill — which would have prohibited cities from installing red light cameras at intersections — created a lot of chatter throughout the state, and I think [Senate Bill 637](#) will finish what

we started last year. My measure would ban political subdivisions from using automated red light cameras to enforce red light violations.

I have also introduced [Senate Joint Resolution 27](#), which seeks to change the way Supreme Court, appellate and circuit court judges are picked. My proposal — which would go on the ballot — would allow the governor to appoint judicial nominees, but would then require the Missouri Senate to make final confirmation. My views on the [Missouri Plan](#) are well-documented — we need to change the way the state's judges are selected. It is time to adjust what Missouri has held onto for nearly 60 years.

I am looking forward to my second year serving the 1st District and I know our mission will be difficult. But, I also know we will work to make Missouri better than it was when we started our work on January 6.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the contact information below.

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