



State Senator Scott T. Rupp ~ District 2

The Rupp Report

Serving Lincoln County & St. Charles County

Column For Week of: February 22, 2010

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Don't Just Show-Me The Money, Show-Me Education Reform

Since I've been in the Legislature, my list regarding education in our state contains many accomplishments: increasing scholarships for students, modifying the A+ schools program to include casino money, and starting the expansion of charter schools.

"Race To The Top" is a federal grant program from the U.S. Department of Education that is set to distribute nearly \$4 billion to the nation's schools. Missouri could receive \$150 million to \$250 million in education funding, if its application is approved. I was disappointed with the final application submitted by Gov. Nixon because several of the education reforms that I've worked on were either left out or watered down. The Legislature was not given a chance to see the application before it was submitted, or I would have fought for the reforms our failing inner-city schools so desperately need. Now I want to make sure that any reforms we must complete as part of "Race To The Top" will also be in line with the Legislature's goals, and that our local control of schools will remain unaffected.

Just introduced this week, [SB 976](#) would give the Missouri Legislature the tools to enact the reforms Missourians want for their schools. If our state's desire to reform education doesn't sync with what the federal government has in mind, then we won't accept the funding.

Senate Bill 976 includes language that establishes a special fund in the budget that holds any grant dollars the state is awarded. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education would have to provide the Legislature the details of the grant, the reforms it would enact, and the consequences of enacting the terms of the grant. With this holding fund in effect, we make sure that we don't accept terms that are not in line with our vision of education reform and that our long-term interests and local control remain the priority.

I believe it's time to change the way we think about education. We've let too many students down for far too long, and we cannot afford to just keep on going with the status quo. True education reform must include charter school expansion, the opting out of tenure, and the start of merit pay and differential pay proposals. By expanding charter schools and utilizing privately run schools, we can give students in failing districts an option to get a high quality education. We should be rewarding our best teachers, and our districts should be given the chance to provide incentives to our best teachers.

The proposed legislation is similar to how the state has handled federal stimulus funds. For example, when we were offered approximately \$40 million in unemployment insurance funding, we did not agree with the permanent changes we were expected to make to our unemployment insurance fund, so we refused the money.

We are the Show-Me State, so you'll have to show us the reforms we want and the details of the program before we take any funds. It's that simple.

If you have any questions about the future of education or any other matter involving state government, please contact my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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