

# Senator Kevin Engler

## Capitol Report

Majority Floor Leader

3rd District



Senator Kevin Engler serves as Majority Floor Leader, the second ranking position in the Senate, and in this role he is responsible for setting the calendar of bills to be discussed by the full Senate.



*Senator Engler in front of the Capitol with his dog, Winston.*

January 14, 2010

## Major Issues Considered

The second week of the 2010 legislative session brought discussion on several big issues that affect our state and the country. As we make job creation our top priority, discussion is just beginning on many issues that could affect Missouri's economy. I am sure we will see these most pressing topics pop up again and again throughout the session.

### Considering New Tax Structures

Job creation will be a major focus of our efforts in the Missouri legislature. Despite the flawed actions of the federal government, we will work hard to make sure Missouri's on the right track. One idea that I find especially interesting is repealing the state income tax. Also called a "fair tax" or "flat tax" this idea replaces the state income tax with higher and expanded sales taxes. This plan ensures that Missourians are only taxed on what they consume, enabling workers to keep more of their paychecks and bringing transparency to tax policy. States that do not have income taxes are continually among the best in the country in job creation and consistently have below average unemployment. Businesses would not have to deal with the state dipping into their earnings, property, and savings, and Missouri could see more companies investing in our economy. This, like any new proposal, has a lot to be worked out if the state were to move forward. One idea that should help reduce the impact on the poor would be to allow for a "prebate" cash card that would help them handle any increases on consumable goods. I look forward to

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vigorous debate as we think of new tax structures that could create jobs and turn our economy around.

Dropping the income tax is one of several ideas to solve the problems our economy is facing, but we can be sure that throwing money at the problem is not the answer. Unemployment numbers for Missouri are soon to be released, and while Missouri is fairing much better than many other states, it looks like the federal stimulus plan has yet to create a single job. In our state, we have to make sure the investments we make result in a return for Missouri's economy and for taxpayers.

### **Federal Unfunded Mandates**

Last year, the Senate held a series of Senate Seminars to allow lawmakers to have open discussions on issues important to Missourians. This year, we continued this practice, and one of the seminars dealt with the national healthcare plan that is currently being debated in Washington. I see many things wrong with the various proposals being rammed through the U.S. Senate and House, but one of the most pressing concerns for Missouri is the cost. The Medicaid expansions in the proposed bill could cost Missouri anywhere from \$250 million to half a billion dollars. Recently, I read that the democrat governor of Tennessee called it the largest unfunded mandate ever passed down to the states. If Missouri has to pay this exorbitant amount to add people to welfare, we would be forced to make drastic cuts to education or raise taxes, and not to mention decrease our investment in job creation just to balance our books.

### **Protecting Taxpayers**

The budget is going to be a major challenge for the Legislature as the state's finances continue to suffer. We must ensure that Missouri taxpayers are protected. With tax season underway, I am calling on Governor Nixon to make sure that Missourians receive their state tax returns on time. Holding this money hostage in order to plug holes in the state's finances would be completely unacceptable. He did this last year, and I do not want to see taxpayers wait for months to see their refunds again.

### **The 2010 Census**

With 2010 upon us, the United States Census is fast approaching. Done every ten years, the census is another opportunity for our voice to be heard. As discussion began on this important topic this week, every projection that I have seen has Missouri right on the brink of losing a seat in Congress. It is extremely important we make a concerted effort to make sure we are filling out our census forms because losing a Congressional seat means Missourians losing a voice in Washington.

This week's work is just the beginning of what is sure to be extended discussion on many of these issues. I will continue to let you know as we make progress on the legislation and policies that affect our state.

**If you know anyone who would like to receive these updates electronically, please [send me](#) an email.**

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