

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.

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April 8, 2010

Working to Craft a Balanced Budget

Over the past several weeks, the Senate Appropriations Committee has been working on the 13 bills that make up the state's core budget. As I have discussed in past columns, this is a particularly tough year for the state's finances. It was recently announced that March collections are down nearly 18 percent compared to the same time last year, and year-to-date collections of revenue are down 13 percent. The Appropriations Committee is having to shave \$500 million off of the governor's original budget proposal to pass a balanced budget. Once the bills are approved by the Senate Appropriations Committee, they will move to the Senate floor and will soon be taken up for debate before the entire body.

The reality of our fiscal situation is that we have to make cuts in spending because we are taking in less revenue than the year before. The committee already had to make tough decisions to make sure that we stay within our state's means. As these bills hit the floor, I am sure there will be heated discussions as we work to meet the state's most pressing needs while reducing costs.

In anticipation of the funding cuts that must be made in the budget process, the Senate Administration Committee, of which I am vice-chair, voted unanimously this week to



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

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cut the Senate's operating budget by 5 percent. The cuts that we agreed upon total \$462,100 and include cutting senators' office budget allotments and/or per diem rates and eliminating current vacant job positions. We also discussed reducing mailing sizes and limiting or ending professional development travel (in and out-of-state). It is only fair that, as we make cuts to programs and services, we find ways to cut our own expenses.

Also this week, we sent [House Bill 1498](#) to the governor's desk. The bill strengthens Missouri's prompt pay statutes and is designed to make the medical claims process more efficient by providing clear direction to both insurers and healthcare providers on their roles and responsibilities. Under the legislation, an insurance company has to accept or deny a claim within 30 days. Often, people and healthcare providers are strung along and forced to go through loads of paperwork and hassles in order to get their healthcare costs paid. The bill also addresses electronic filings and makes sure the law is clear on penalties when insurance carriers fail to promptly pay a claim. With the governor's signature, the bill would go into effect on January 1, 2011.

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

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