



Senator Luann Ridgeway – Serving Clay County

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Legislative Session Begins

The 2010 legislative session kicked off last week in Jefferson City with a somber but determined tone as we are all well-aware of the challenges that we must face in the coming year. The weather played a role in the somber tone of our opening week of session. For the first time I can remember, a day of legislative session was cancelled due to a winter snow storm. The budget promises to be the biggest issue of the session, but despite a recession that has led to steep revenue shortfalls, we are committed to **not raising taxes on hard-working Missourians** to make up for lost money.

Although it will not be easy, we must still find a way to reconcile decreased revenues with state programs and services paid for with state funds. This will likely result in some significant cuts, but it is too soon to say where the cuts will come from. We will hear the governor's budget plan when he gives his State of the State address on Wednesday, January 20 at 7 p.m., and his suggestions will be taken under consideration as the Legislature develops its budget for fiscal year 2011 in the coming weeks. Prudent fiscal decisions made in the past have kept our state in relatively good shape when many other states are faring much worse, but if we are to keep our footing, we must continue to make responsible choices.

Other issues that will take a front seat this session include ethics reform in the Legislature, tax credit reform and federal health care legislation and its effects on our state. I am opposed to Government run take over of our healthcare system, while our system isn't perfect and reforms are needed, more

government taxation and regulation is not the answer.

I am sponsoring several bills this year, including a measure that would support our state’s small businesses—the true life-force of our economy. For instance, [Senate Bill 597](#) would require that 10 percent of all state contracts be awarded to businesses with less than 25 employees. In Missouri, 90% of our jobs are from businesses with 25 or less employees. While this year there will be plenty of talk on how to best stimulate the economy and create jobs, I believe that true economic development begins with our state’s entrepreneurs. We cannot have a discussion about the economy and jobs without including small business development as part of the overall plan.

Other bills I am sponsoring this session include:

- [SB 598](#): Requires all first-class counties—such as Clay County—to accept installment payments for certain property taxes. Under current law, counties may accept installment payments at their discretion.
- [SB 599](#): Removes the requirement that goods and services be purchased by the state and public institutions from the Missouri Vocational Enterprises program (an inmate labor program).
- [SB 652](#): Allows jury trials in termination of parental rights actions.
- [SJR 23](#): Upon voter approval, this constitutional amendment would prohibit a political subdivision from receiving state funding if it provides health insurance to its employees through a public health insurance option plan sponsored by the federal government.

I will continue to keep you updated on the status of my bills—as well as other important bills that affect the lives of Clay Countians—as legislation makes its way through the legislative process. If you have any questions or comments about any matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

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