



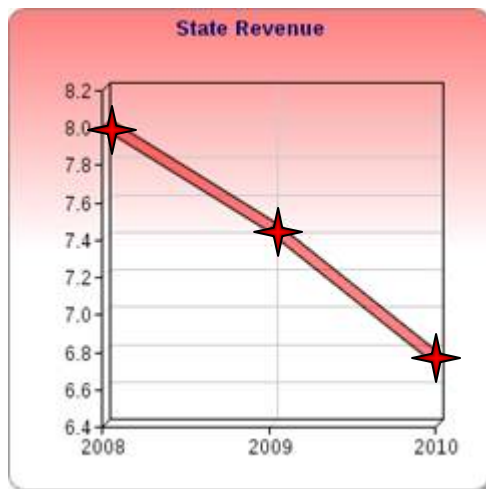
Senator Luann Ridgeway – Serving Clay County

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### *Coping with a Historic Budget Crisis*

The budget proposed by the governor in January would spend \$8.3 billion in general revenue, which exceeds any reasonable estimate of tax receipts for the upcoming fiscal year by more than \$1 billion. This means that **our budget is structurally out of balance and cannot be sustained with the current spending plan.**

Fortunately, the disciplined decisions of the past few years have put Missouri in a better financial position to weather the economic storm than most states. But we are not immune to having to make difficult budget decisions that will keep us financially sound.



*Missouri state revenue by fiscal year (billions)*

Based on revenue collections, the current fiscal year's budget is going to experience a historic shortfall.

To this end, the governor recently reduced another \$126 million from the fiscal year 2010 budget. This brings the total cuts and withholdings for this year to \$850 million. The current fiscal year ends June 30, 2010, at which point FY 2011 will take effect. The Legislature is currently working on the budget for the upcoming year, which will run July 1, 2010, through June 30, 2011.

Unlike Congress, our Missouri Constitution requires that we must have a balanced budget. The state of Missouri cannot borrow our way to prosperity or print money to satisfy unrestrained and politically motivated spending habits.

Some politicians are content to rely on one-time monies from the federal government, but as you may recall, the extreme budget deficit we faced earlier this decade was a result of uncontrolled spending. When that money runs out, the programs are still there and the financial burden is then entirely on the backs of our Missouri families.

How out of touch with our existing economic condition can we be to accept a budget that will require nearly 15 percent more of your income tax dollars when the one-time money runs out next year?

This is a time for restraint, a time to truly prioritize spending and a time to make our state bureaucracy more efficient.

### ***Seeking YOUR Ideas!***

To help facilitate the conversation on how to cost costs, the Senate recently launched an initiative called "Rebooting Government," which invites Missourians to provide their ideas for how to restructure and streamline our state government.

Already, the Senate has received more than 1,500 ideas from the public. To put the best ideas into action, the Senate dedicated a day this week to reviewing all proposed ideas in eight small groups, made up of four senators each. Each group then presented at least five ideas they agreed upon to the full Senate at the conclusion of the work day. The ideas may eventually be introduced in legislation or through the budget process, or even implemented through executive order. The goal is to implement the best ideas in the hope of finding additional savings.

We will continue to accept your ideas throughout the legislative session, which ends on May 14, 2010. I encourage you to submit your ideas online by visiting [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov) and clicking on the [Rebooting Government](#) icon. Submissions may be anonymous. This is a once-in-a-blue-moon opportunity to make significant changes to the way our state government operates.

### ***Missouri's Health Care Freedom Act***

In light of the federal government's unfortunate passage of the health care takeover bill this week, the Missouri Senate began debate on legislation that works to ensure Missourians retain their health care freedom. Senate Joint Resolution 25 is a proposed constitutional amendment known as the "[Health Care Freedom Act](#)." If passed by the Legislature, and approved by voters, this legislation would amend the Missouri Constitution to prohibit any federal law from forcing a patient, employer, or health care provider to participate in any government or privately run health care system. I hope we can give you, The People, the opportunity to make your voice heard on health care even when Washington D.C. doesn't want to listen.

### ***Your Questions Answered***

Do you have questions about state government? As you know, times are tough and government as we know it is changing quickly and dramatically. My door is always open to your questions and your suggestions on solutions. Each week I will feature some of the most frequent questions that come to my office—I hope to hear from you!

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