



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer
18th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Capitol Office
(573) 751-7852**

The State of Our State

JEFFERSON CITY – The legislative session typically kicks into high gear after the governor delivers his annual State of the State Address. In his address, the Governor unveils his budget proposal for the coming fiscal year, which is used as the starting point for our budget negotiations in the House and Senate. Despite the difficult economic times we are in right now, I think the governor has submitted a budget proposal that makes sense for Missouri.

Even though our state is in better shape financially than a lot of other states, we still face tough budget challenges. In response, Governor Nixon has cut the size of state government by 1,800 positions and eliminated a number of state boards and commissions that were no longer serving a legitimate purpose. He has also been forced to cut millions from the FY 2010 budget because state revenue collections continue to fall below earlier projections.

However, the news is not all doom and gloom. In his budget proposal for FY 2011, the governor recommends an \$18 million increase in funding for K-12 education. In fact, education is the one area the governor took off the table when he and his staff crafted their budget proposal. The governor has also negotiated a tuition freeze for the second straight year at our two- and four-year public colleges and universities so more families can afford a higher education. Nixon's budget proposal also provides more than \$37 million for the Career Ladder Program, which helps pay Missouri teachers for their excellent work.

One of the main priorities for the governor and the General Assembly this year is job creation. The governor's Missouri First initiative will help existing Missouri businesses expand and create jobs by giving them preference for state incentives. The governor's Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act will recruit high-tech businesses to our state and make Missouri a leader in the plant, animal and life sciences industry. His "Training

for Tomorrow” plan will help community colleges in Missouri increase job training programs in high-demand fields such as health care. Additionally, the governor’s budget proposal calls for a \$2.4 million increase (\$16.4 million in total recommended funding) for the Missouri Customized Job Training Program to provide training and retraining of workers to help create and retain jobs.

Our state’s number one industry – agriculture – also gets support from the governor in his budget proposal. He recommends \$34.2 million in state funding for biodiesel incentives to benefit our state’s agricultural economy and our farmers. This represents an increase of \$9 million to complement the full funding of the ethanol incentive payments lawmakers approved last year.

Finally, the governor’s budget proposal does not include any tax increases. Last year 29 other states increased taxes and fees in order to balance their budgets, but Missouri has managed to weather the storm better than others because of fiscal restraint. Missouri state government has to tighten its belt just like families across our state.

Of course, Missouri has a Democratic governor and a Republican-controlled legislature, so it’s going to be very important for everyone to work together this year on behalf of the people who sent us here to represent their interests.

As always, we welcomed a number of visitors to our Capitol office this week, including the Senate “Doctor of the Day” Dr. Michael Bukstein; Roger Brallier, with a group of seventh grade students from Mexico; as well as a group of Realtors from Kirksville.

If you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.