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The Stouffer Report: The Missouri Legislature Is Back in Session


Lawmakers have made their return to Jefferson City. While we know this year will be about balancing our state's budget, there are also other issues we plan to tackle by May 14, 2010.

Ethics: The legislature will consider [Senate Bill 577](#) to work to restore the public's trust in state government. Ethics reform has made a fast rise to the top of the list of legislative priorities as far as non-budget items go. The measure would take specific steps towards avoiding career-ending mistakes made by former colleagues.

Education: To continue to ensure that students receive a world-class education no matter where they live, [Senate Bill 603](#) would allow families the choice to enroll children in an adjacent public school without tuition costs. No school district would be required to admit students if doing so would violate its class size and teacher-pupil ratio. This concept, known as "open enrollment," could benefit rural folks who live closer to a school in a neighboring school district than their own.

Tax Credits: Working to balance the state's budget, [Senate Bill 584](#) would require the mandatory review and sunset of certain tax credit programs. The measure would modify the sunset act to terminate new programs three years from their effective date, and if reauthorized, programs would terminate three years from the date of reauthorization. Tax credits drew a lot of debate last year and I see this continuing into 2010.

There's a hodge-podge of other legislation that has also been offered, from banning text messages to exempting state and local sales taxes on yoga classes. However, legislative leaders have made it clear that meeting the

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state's needs through a balanced budget without tax increases and ethics reform will be the focus of much of our work in the General Assembly in 2010.

To learn more about new legislation being proposed this year, listen to live audio of debate happening in your state's Senate and more, visit www.senate.mo.gov.

We have a long way to go before May 14. Our goal is to keep the budget balanced without raising taxes in these tough economic times. Every bill we look at this year will be weighed based on effectiveness and cost. It will be a challenging year, but refreshing to see government spending so scrutinized. I have no doubt we will come away stronger as a state than we did coming into this session.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.



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