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The Stouffer Report: *Balancing the Missouri Budget*

This has been one of the most challenging years in state history, in terms of balancing the budget. We have an advantage that other states and the federal government could learn from, and that is our state's constitutional requirement to have a balanced budget.

In January, the governor presented his spending plan to Missouri lawmakers. Even then, we all knew there was no way his idea could be done. Since then, revenues have plummeted in Missouri, prompting the governor to withhold more than \$800 million for the *current* fiscal year budget, resulting in the Missouri Senate working overtime to get *next year's* budget trimmed to size.

Initially, we were given a \$23.9 billion budget by the governor. The Missouri House cut \$204 million from this plan and left the rest to the Senate. We had to make tough decisions this year. We had to cut into essential services across the board, including education. At the end, the [Senate Appropriations Committee](#) wound up cutting \$450 million from the governor's original spending proposal. By the way, now he says we may need to trim another \$200 million in order to meet declining revenue projections.

Balancing the state's budget is essential to keeping government from growing too far out of control. We all know what the federal government has been up to lately. They are printing money

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non-stop to cover debts that may take generations to pay down. We do not have that same luxury in Missouri. We are doing what families all over rural Missouri are doing. We are looking at how much money we have, what we need and what we can do without. Most importantly, we are doing this *without* raising your taxes.

The bad news is, as tough as things are this year, next year looks to be worse. We used approximately \$900 million in remaining federal stimulus funds to balance the 2011 budget. This money will not be here for 2012. I pray that all of us will be able to work together and get through these troubling times. If we do, we will be able to come out of this stronger and better for it. As the legislative session winds down, we will continue to make the tough decisions at the state Capitol.

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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