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The Stouffer Report: Session Review – Budget

We are heading toward Missouri's next fiscal year, which will start on July 1, 2010. The Missouri General Assembly worked very hard to cut nearly \$500 million from the original budget proposal given to us by the governor back in January.

This has been an opportunity to keep bigger government at bay, while passing a balanced budget.

I have often talked about the need to make tough decisions in relation to government spending. Some of those decisions happened this year, through the Missouri Senate's "[Rebooting Government](#)" efforts. Many more of those decisions will have to be made next year, when the state no longer has federal stimulus dollars to pull from. Most of what we did for fiscal year 2011 involves small cuts in most of the services provided by the state.

The state Legislature went through the governor's \$23.9 billion spending plan and trimmed \$486 million. Since the bulk of funding goes toward social services and education, that is where some funding was reduced. A reduction of 5 percent was out of the [higher education bill](#), which brings that portion of the budget down to \$1.2 billion. [Elementary and secondary education](#) also received a decrease of funding for items outside of classroom instruction. This totaled a 1 percent reduction, to \$5.3 billion.

In addition, [spending for the current year's Career Ladder program was restored](#), which will pay teachers for extra services provided in the district. [Parents As Teachers](#) will also see some changes, which will result in some folks paying for services that used to be free to them, but will also mean the program will continue to exist.

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Mental health services have also been trimmed for 2011. The legislature cut 1 percent from this budget, which takes spending to \$1.2 billion. This will translate to cutting services and some staff members in most of the state's mental hospitals. I expressed concerns with the types of changes made here as these facilities, which take care of the state's developmentally disabled, have seen major reductions in funding in recent years.

The Department of Corrections will also see a reduction in funding for the next fiscal year. The Legislature removed 1 percent of their budget, which takes them to \$660 million for the coming year. This is a tricky area for cuts; we want to make sure all of Missouri's prisons are safe and provide the folks working there with the security measures they need.

State employee benefit spending was also trimmed, by 6 percent, to \$899 million. There was a move to improve state employee retirements this year, but the bill did not pass. The state is also are looking at reducing the number of state jobs by about 1,000. Most of these will be done through early retirement and attrition.

None of these decisions were easy to make, but necessary. The Legislature will have to make many of these same types of decisions again next year, since we are being told we could see a \$1 billion shortfall for fiscal year 2012. The governor has also said he plans to withhold \$350 million from the 2011 budget. Our tasks will not be easy, but with your help and prayers, we will get through this together.

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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