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Local Oversight Needed on Federal Stimulus Dollars

As money from the federal government's "stimulus package" continues to be paid out, we are finding more reasons for real oversight of those dollars.

Back in September, a [film festival](#) was scheduled to be held in Warrensburg. At the time, \$100,000 in [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act](#) (ARRA) funding was slated to be used to pay for this. After some folks read the fine print at the bottom of the page, questions were asked. Later, the [Missouri Department of Social Services](#) (DSS) came out and said using stimulus money for this event was not appropriate so they prorated the funding, meaning private dollars replaced the stimulus funding.

I am glad local folks and state officials took a second look at this and made the right call. However, this could have been avoided if there were somebody watching how the stimulus money is distributed to begin with.

During the regular legislative session this year, my colleagues and I considered [Senate Bill 757](#).

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This would have established a committee to oversee stimulus funds in Missouri. Fortunately, the essence of the measure was included in [House Bill 1965](#), which was signed into law. However, [House Bill 1903](#) was vetoed by the governor. All the Legislature was asking for was the right to oversee where the federal stimulus money was going. An attempt was made to override the governor's veto in the House during the General Assembly's annual veto session in September, but this effort was unsuccessful.

This points to one of the flaws of the so-called stimulus. The federal government took nearly \$1 trillion of taxpayers' hard-earned dollars and used them for whatever purpose they saw fit. Most of this money came with so many strings attached that there was no way to use it properly. In fact, South Carolina told the president "no, thanks" and was then ordered by a judge to take the money anyway.

We will continue to do what we can, in relation to the stimulus money, and try to ensure it is spent wisely. Missouri lawmakers will also keep working to help get us out of this recession and into a real recovery. We want to put folks back to work. I pray we can do this as quickly and as effectively as possible.

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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