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The Missouri General Assembly Prepares for the Next Session

Missouri lawmakers have a simple mission for 2011: put people back to work.

When the First Regular Session of the 96th General Assembly begins in January, a lot of folks will be watching to see what moves the Legislature will make in terms of job creation. We have to improve employers' ability to hire and retain employees, and secure certainty in take-home pay of every working family in Missouri.

We have to help rural Missouri families survive by helping employers keep and create better paying jobs with benefits. How do we do this? We need to cap the [corporate franchise tax](#), restore balance to Missouri's [Human Rights Act](#), and ensure employee choice when leaving or joining a union.

The corporate franchise tax is double taxation and hurts businesses. Business owners should not have to pay a tax just to be in business. Currently, the largest franchise taxpayer in Missouri has to pay approximately \$1.9 million a year. This stifles investment, both in expansion

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and hiring. Kansas is phasing out its corporate franchise tax. Starting in 2011, it will be gone altogether.

Despite the tremendous efforts the General Assembly has made, in regard to tort reform, more needs to be done. The state's "Human Rights Act" needs to be brought in line with what federal law states. Jury trials versus trials heard by judges, company versus individual liability, and damage caps need to be taken into consideration when rewriting this act. This will cut back on money spent for lawsuits and attorney fees.

Another priority this year will be to get a handle on the budget. We will not have federal stimulus money shoved down our throat this coming year. This is a good thing, because it will mean the Legislature will have to take charge and cut the budget the right way. At the top of this list: DO NOT raise taxes. The General Assembly has not raised taxes in a number of years, and it has helped us to stay above water when other states are scrambling to make ends meet.

We have to do more with less in government. Hard-working families throughout rural Missouri are doing this, so why not state government? We started this last year and will continue the trend until we start to see a real recovery, not just in Missouri, but throughout the country.

The Legislature also needs to continue its commitment to education. We have to maintain K-12 school funding at its current level, continue to make college more affordable, remove government red tape and ensure every student continues to get a world-class education.

The work will be hard, but the rewards for Missourians will be great. I pray that the Missouri General Assembly will work FOR the people and continue to keep rural Missouri growing and

prosperous in the coming year.

*Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll,
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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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