

State Senator Robert Mayer

The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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Back In Session and Back To Work

With a loud bang of the gavel, the Second Regular Session of the 95th General Assembly opened this week with excitement and anticipation. We have our work cut out for us, but I know that my colleagues and I are up to the challenge.

The big focus is the budget and the impact it will have on the state. The consensus revenue estimate was released right before the session began, and while Missouri is better off than many other states in the country, we are looking at a second year in a row of decreased revenue. We are officially \$793 million below what was initially budgeted for 2010. The projections show another decline in general revenues – at least seven percent – for this fiscal year. There is some hope, as we are predicting a slight rise of 3.6 percent for 2012 – but let me leave no doubt that there will need to be more cuts and more difficult decisions in the coming days.

Nevertheless, my Senate colleagues and I are committed to exercising financial responsibility and restraint without raising taxes and through minimizing the loss of vital programs and services. I believe we made great strides toward this last session, as we were able to address the shortfalls in the budget and leave an anticipated \$1.1 billion of federal budget stabilization dollars to use in the next fiscal year. We did this while continuing our commitment to stimulating Missouri's economy and supporting our education system by fully funding K-12 education and increasing funding for higher education.

My role as chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee means that much of my work will be focused on ensuring that your government is wise and prudent as we tighten our belt even further. However, I've also pre-filed several bills. One would create open enrollment across school district bounty lines for public school students starting in July of 2011. It's time to allow parents the opportunity to control their child's education, and I believe this bill is fair for taxpayers and school districts. Another is aimed at protecting the water rights of Southeastern Missouri farmers from heavy water users by giving the state attorney general or the parties affected the chance to file an injunction. If passed, I believe this bill will make sure that water rights won't get in the way of the hard work our farmers need to do.

As many of you know, I've co-sponsored a bill that says no to big federal government and brings the health care issue to the public. This bill makes it a state constitutional amendment that no patient, employer or health care provider has to participate in any government run health care system. We don't want to wait to see what the federal government has in store for your health. This bill gives voters the chance to retain their own choices in medical care.

I am here to work for you, so if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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