

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



Column For March 5, 2010

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Missouri Budget Faces Historic Reductions

This week, the governor confirmed what many of us had already suspected: the \$300 million in federal stabilization funds, which he listed when preparing his budget, may not fully materialize. This shortfall in the budget, combined with the decline in revenues of 12.7 percent, means that Missouri is officially in a historic situation when it comes to the funding available for all the departments, programs, and services that this state provides.

As we approach spring recess, which is essentially the mid-point of our yearly session, time has become a major concern for this year's budget process. Missouri's constitution requires a balanced budget by May 7. When the Legislature gets back to Jefferson City on March 15, we are going to need to roll up our sleeves and really get to the big decisions that will shape our state's future.

My colleagues and I are exploring every option available to us to meet our constitutional requirement of a balanced budget, but it will require much work and many hard decisions in the months to come. We have asked the governor to provide a new budget proposal or provide a detailed proposal on how to address the shortfall, and I am confident that together we will find a way. It is going to take more than mere spending cuts, because even though some signs begin to point to recovery, experts say that it will still be a while before we really begin to see the benefits of that recovery. In the meantime, we may need to adopt a whole new way of thinking, and several options are being discussed at the Capitol about how best to address our state's financial needs.

As the chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee I have been busy listening to testimony from the various state departments, detailing where they are financially and what cuts could be made while still providing much needed services. This information will guide us in the difficult decisions that will follow, and coupled with the fact that we now have a clearer idea of what the governor's recommendations consist of, we can minimize the loss of vital programs and services.

I, as always, am committed to exercising financial responsibility and restraining spending without raising taxes. While the situation is dire, it is not unsolvable. I look forward to meeting the challenge and keeping Missouri on the road of financial stability. Together we will weather this storm as we always have, and prosper again.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, you can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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