

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

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



Column For April 21, 2010

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Making Difficult Decisions, But Balancing the Budget

Last week was the culmination of the Senate Appropriations process, as I presented the 13 House bills, and their corresponding Senate versions that make up the fiscal year 2011 budget, to the full Senate body. As the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, the budget has been my responsibility this session, and I can tell you that this year's budget process was one of the most difficult in our state's history.

Unlike the federal government, Missouri's constitution requires a balanced budget. Since we have had historic revenue declines, we had to make some difficult decisions, as the governor's initial recommendations put our state in the red by at least \$500 million. The governor's budget also included nearly \$300 million federal dollars, also known as stimulus money. That's hopefully a one-time effort from our federal government, and shouldn't be counted on for our future. Just like your household, we cannot base our budget on one-time windfalls or wishes — we must base our decisions on reality, or what is in our bank account.

To that end, we cut \$453.8 million from our budget. This was not easy, because every Missourian counts on services provided by our state. However, our priorities were to support Missouri's K-12 education system, to minimize the impact of this historic shortfall as much as possible, and to not raise taxes on our state's hardworking families.

We accomplished those goals, but we did have to reduce funding to many important programs and state spending. Most of the reductions came from the untold millions saved by reducing state departments, positions, equipment, travel, holidays, the court system, higher education and much more. We also stopped new spending, and we cut the Legislature's budget by about half a million dollars.

These difficult decisions allowed us to pass a budget that continues to provide the critical functions of your state government without a tax increase. It was my honor to work with my colleagues and guide our state through this historic budget crisis. I firmly believe that we have taken the first steps to putting Missouri's government on a long-term, sustainable path that Missouri taxpayers can afford.

Later this week, we move to conference committee on the budget, where select members of the Senate and the House discuss the discrepancies in the two budgets before sending it to the governor.

Please take a moment to visit my website, where I have posted a video that fully explains the decisions we made on this year's budget and the reasons behind them. You can reach the video by clicking the multimedia link. If you have any questions or concerns about the state budget, you may always contact my office at 1-877-291-5584.

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