

Week of January 4, 2010



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New Legislative Session Underway

The 2010 legislative session began this week and as we've heard for months now, it promises to be a challenging year. The recession has led to revenue shortfalls that will need to be addressed as we prepare a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. It looks as though we will tackle several issues that will require a significant amount of compromise, such as ethics reform in the Legislature, tax credits affecting job creation and education.

The session officially began as we convened in the Capitol at noon on Wednesday, Jan. 6 to listen to Senate Leader Charlie Shields give his opening day address, which outlined his priorities for the year. Senator Shields talked about the importance of long-term planning in state government, despite the tendency of the Legislature to only focus on the present. He also noted how the creation of the three Senate 2020 Committees last year was a great first step in shifting our focus from reaction to action, and how we must continue our forward-thinking approach in the years to come. This year's legislative session will run through May 14, 2010.

As part of his commitment to long-term planning and building a foundation of knowledge for our state Legislature, last year Sen. Shields organized a series of informational seminars to educate senators on a variety of issues facing our state. The seminars helped us all gain a fundamental knowledge of the issues we are sure to encounter at one point or another during our time in the Senate. Though many of us have specific knowledge of certain issues, as lawmakers we are also expected to have an understanding of all of the topics that may arise at any given time.

The success of last year's seminars led Sen. Shields to continue the tradition this year, so over the next week, senators will attend a series of six Senate seminars for the 2010 legislative session, which will include topics such as ethics, federal health care legislation,

health information technology, the Higher Education P-20 Council, tax policy, the 2010 U.S. Census, and Senate “2020” Committees. As chairman of the [Missouri Senate Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee](#), I will update my colleagues on the activities of the committee during the interim and present our plans for 2010 during next week’s seminar focusing on the Senate’s 2020 Committees. The seminar will be held on Jan. 12 at 3 p.m. Details will be available on the Missouri Senate website at www.senate.mo.gov.

Already, the Educated Citizenry committee has met several times to determine our goals and map out a practical plan to achieve those goals. We’ve also heard testimony from several people involved in all aspects of education who have provided us with invaluable input. Our committee’s next steps include working to summarize the public testimony we heard during the interim, narrowing our focus to create a framework for what educational success will look like in 2020, gathering more public testimony after we develop a vision statement and plan of action, and presenting a report to the Senate at the end of 2010.

We’ve already made significant headway in laying out our plans to improve education at every level in our state, but once the goal-making process is over, that’s when the real work begins. Ultimately, our state’s economic fate is tied to the quality of our state’s education. We must have a strategic plan that will lead to long-term success if Missouri is to blaze the trail for the rest of the nation. Though many challenges await us this year, I believe we are approaching them with the right mindset and an eye to the future, which will make us well-prepared for years to come.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senatorial District.

Contact Information

Capitol Office
State Capitol Building
Room 419
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Website:
<http://www.senate.mo.gov/pearce>

Phone Number:
866.277.0882 (toll-free)
573.751.2272

Fax:
573.526.7381