

For Immediate Release
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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

This week the Senate passed an ethics bill that would make changes to some of the ethics laws that have been put into place over the years. As you may remember, three of our state legislators have resigned over ethics violations in the past year with one serving a prison term.

Although this bill would not have affected any of these cases, many thought that we need to make changes and review some of the laws that were in place. All in all, we can write all the laws we want and we will never make unethical people ethical. The ultimate authority needs to remain the voter. This means that voters must educate themselves on their elected officials, how they vote and how they conduct themselves in both public and private life.

At the risk of repeating myself week after week on the severity of our state budget, I must once again stress to you what will happen to the future of our state if we continue to delay tough choices.

The majority of legislators still do not understand the stress that is being put on our state budget. The proposed budget would spend \$8.3 billion which exceeds any reasonable estimate of tax receipts for the upcoming year by more than a \$1 billion. This means that our budget is structurally out of balance and cannot be sustained with the current spending plan.

Fortunately, the disciplined decisions of the past few years have put Missouri in a better financial position to weather the economic storm than most states, but we are not immune to having to make difficult budget decisions that will keep us financially sound.

As you may recall, our budget difficulties earlier this decade were a result of uncontrolled spending that relied on one-time monies. Such a policy is not sustainable, but politicians are often afraid of making difficult decisions because they fear unpopularity, especially in an election year.

It may be considered good politics by some, but in the end it is lousy fiscal policy. We cannot allow one-time federal dollars to lead us down the path to ever more federal dependency and greater threats to your pocketbook. Otherwise the states become mini-federal governments that depend upon deficit spending.

How out of touch with our existing economic condition can we be to accept a budget that will require nearly 15% more of your general revenue dollars when the one-time money runs out next year? This is a time for restraint, a time to truly prioritize spending and a time to make our state bureaucracy more efficient.

Unlike Congress, our Missouri Constitution requires that we must have a balanced budget. The state of Missouri cannot borrow our way to prosperity or print money to satisfy unrestrained and politically motivated spending habits.

People are outraged with the unparalleled and unending spending spree in Washington, D. C., which denies the economic reality that we live in today. Long-term and continuous deficit spending, regardless of which political party is in power, must stop. Nipping at the edges of this issue with small spending cuts and other current thinking doesn't even come close to solving the problem. Missouri cannot and must not follow in those footsteps.

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. I can be reached in Jefferson City at (573)751-1882, e-mail to chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov or by regular mail at 201 West Capitol Avenue, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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