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Senate President Pro Tem

MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Ron Richard
Speaker of the House

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House and Senate Leaders Announce Shared Priorities *Offer Common-Sense Solutions for Missouri's Future*

JEFFERSON CITY – With a focus on Missouri's future, House and Senate leaders, joined by Lt. Governor Peter Kinder, today announced their shared priorities they plan to accomplish early in the legislative session. Those priorities include protecting Missouri taxpayers and families, ethics reforms and urging Congress to act in the best interest of Missourians.

"In 2010, we will move with great fortitude in facing our state's financial crisis head on," said Kinder. "I am encouraged by our legislative leaders and their commitment to find common-sense solutions for Missouri families. As politicians in Washington promote more government to fix our problems, we will remain committed to our core principles of life and liberty for all Missouri families."

Speaker of the House Ron Richard, R-Joplin, said together they will take every step they can to keep hard-working Missourians' pay in their own pockets. Richard also placed an emphasis on economic development and job creation in Missouri.

"The General Assembly serves the people of Missouri, and we will work to produce meaningful legislation that directly improves the lives of our citizens," said Richard. "Creating jobs, retaining the jobs already in place and making Missouri an attractive business climate is the key to the success of our state and the heartbeat of Missouri citizens – this has been, and will continue to be a primary focus."

Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R- St. Joseph, reinforced the call to protect taxpayers. He added that Missouri's best economic development tool is an educated work force.

"We must not raise taxes and we must continue our commitment of making education our top budget priority," Shields said. "We are facing an on-going budget crisis and to succeed, we must have a governor who will do his job and present a balanced budget that is not short-sighted."

Senate Majority Floor Leader Kevin Engler, R-Farmington, and House Majority Floor Leader Steven Tilley, R-Perryville, said the Senate and House would continue to build a partnership that will get things done for the people of Missouri.

Engler added that the House and Senate will call on the governor to issue prompt income tax refunds.

"Every Missourian owed an income tax refund should get that money back as soon as possible," Engler said. "When the governor holds onto rightfully owed refunds like he did last year, he's essentially taking an interest-free loan on the backs' of taxpayers without their permission."

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“Unlike Washington D.C., we want to make it very clear in Missouri that we are listening to our citizens and committed to taking a common sense approach to solving our problems,” said Tilley. “Because I believe, despite a tough environment and issues with the federal government, that we are going to be successful in Missouri because our state legislature will work together for our citizens. Whether it’s greater accountability, more transparency, or prudent fiscal spending we will deliver for Missouri.”

The leaders said other early priorities would include requiring more oversight of federal stimulus dollars spent in Missouri, preventing double-dipping into state unemployment benefits, and stopping Medicaid crooks.

The Second Regular Session of the 95th Missouri General Assembly began Jan. 6. The leaders outlined their shared priorities one week before the Governor is anticipated to unveil his budget in the State of the State.

What Senators and Representatives Are Saying About Getting Things Done for Missouri Families

“A balanced budget is not only a priority but a requirement of the Missouri Constitution. I look forward to working with my colleagues to achieve that end by maintaining essential state programs without raising taxes.” -Sen. Rob Mayer

“Missourians cannot afford the \$250 - \$800 million unfunded mandate prescribed in Congress’ government-run healthcare bill. We will stand up for Missourians and in a broader sense, our state’s rights by examining where the federal government oversteps its bounds and putting it back in its place.” – Sen. Gary Nodler

“Its imperative we try not to solve our revenue shortfalls by imposing any tax increases or fees on Missouri families.” - Sen. Norma Champion

“We will work to stop federal government mandates from bankrupting our state. Missouri taxpayers should not be left holding the bag for out-of-control federal spending tied to government takeovers of our healthcare and energy resources.” – Sen. Jack Goodman

“This session the Missouri legislature is continuing our commitment to putting the interests of Missouri taxpayers first through our efforts to ensure proper accountability and oversight over the use of stimulus funds and requiring greater transparency in our state government.” –Sen. Scott T. Rupp

“As we move into the new year, budget issues will continue to be a high priority item. With hard earned tax dollars, we need to make sure that fraud and abuse - not only in Medicaid, but across state government - are found and that the taxpayers’ dollars are put to high investment uses such as education and job opportunities.” – Sen. Chuck Purgason

“We will continue our commitment to education both in funding and with innovative ideas to make life-long learning opportunities affordable to as many students as possible.” –Sen. David Pearce

“We must fight back when it comes to our state’s sovereignty. One way to do that is by shielding Missourians from federal health care mandates by protecting our rights to make our own medical and insurance choices.” – Sen. Jane Cunningham

“We are committed to making Missouri a leader in recapturing precious tax dollars that are defrauded by enacting one of the toughest Medicaid fraud laws in the country.” –Sen. Eric Schmitt

“We will hold state departments accountable, especially when it comes to making sure that public safety information is released without delay concerning Missouri’s waters.” –Sen. Kurt Schaefer

“It is imperative that the Department of Revenue must return Missouri taxpayers’ income tax refunds promptly. The refunds belong to the taxpayers, not the state.” - Rep. Denny Hoskins

“The people of Missouri must be given a reason to trust their elected officials and have faith in their work. This means we require a more open, transparent and accountable government. Oversight of stimulus funds would create just that while also ensuring that the billions of stimulus dollars Missouri receives are not subject to waste, fraud, or abuse. Missourians of this great state deserve no less.”
- Rep. Jason Smith

“As an elected public servant of the State of Missouri, I believe it is important to put the taxpaying citizens of our state first. I fully support the idea of sending back Missouri income tax refunds in a timely manner as a mandate, not simply a wishful goal. Missouri families have earned this money and deserve to have their money returned quickly.” - Rep. Darrell Pollock

“I will not raise taxes on the citizens of Missouri. I also fully support efforts by many of my colleagues to ensure that our taxpayer refunds are returned to them in a timely manner.”
- Rep. Billy Pat Wright

“One of our priorities will be to protect Missourians from the excesses of the Federal Government that have disturbed many of us over the past few months. That is why we will be seeking to pass the Health Care Freedom Act and the other bills that will firmly assert the constitutional rights of the common sense Missouri citizens who are massively opposed to the Government takeovers, mandates and excessive taxation.” - Rep. Timothy W. Jones

“If the men and women protecting our nation are subject to drug testing, why shouldn't those who are receiving assistance from Missouri taxpayers be?” - Rep. David Day

“Missourians are not happy to see their hard earned tax dollars used to subsidize drug use. Also, we must get a handle on drug use in Missouri. Babies born to mothers using crack and meth frequently have irreversible brain damage. They have major behavioral disorders that require psychiatric drugs the rest of their lives.” - Rep. Ellen Brandom

“The only way to stop a bully is to stand up to him. In this case the national government has clearly stepped over the line and is presuming the states will roll over and play dead. We must call their bluff. They can play “rock, paper, scissors” all they want, but now it is time for us to teach them a lesson on the constitution. This national healthcare proposal is an offense to the principles of liberty. Our highest loyalty will always rest with protecting our citizens from further encroachments by the big bloated national government.” - Rep. Cynthia Davis

“It is well past time for property tax reform in the State of Missouri. House Bill 1350 will level the spiraling increases in property tax.” - Rep. Marilyn Ruestman

“I do not support the Cap and Trade legislation and I think this is a terrible initiative for our state. There is no doubt that it will drive up the cost of utilities on Missouri families and businesses in a very short time span.” - Rep. Mike Parson

“The citizens of Missouri are over-taxed at all levels. We cannot raise taxes on hard-working Missourians.” - Rep. Gary Dusenberg

“Welfare is a short-term, temporary fix, not a long-term solution or escape from responsibility. A clear drug test is required for most employment opportunities; therefore the standard should be no less for welfare from the State of Missouri.” - Rep. Kenny Jones

“The most important action we will make to stabilize our environment for job growth is balance the budget. Washington should follow our lead, because Missourians know what it means to balance a budget.” - Rep. Eric Burlison

“In these tough economic times, when families and individuals are struggling to make ends meet, the state needs to tighten its belt and cut taxes to help Missourians.” - Rep. Will Kraus

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Protecting Your Tax Dollars

- Urge the Governor to issue prompt income tax refunds.
- Require legislative oversight for the spending of federal stimulus dollars.
- Verify that anyone receiving unemployment benefits is not receiving unemployment benefits from any other states.
- Reduce fraud and abuse in the Medicaid system.
- Review license office bidding process to ensure it is fair.

Defending Missouri Families

- Pledge that there will be absolutely no tax increases on Missourians.
- Make certain that statutes pertaining to clean water are implemented to ensure public safety of our citizens.
- Require credit agencies to withhold reporting negative information if it is caused by identity theft.

Upholding Missouri Values

- Ensure greater transparency in government.
- Strengthen ethics enforcement.
- Opposing Big Government
- Oppose the federal government takeover of our health care system.
- Call upon Congress to oppose cap-and-trade legislation.
- Urge Congress not to pass card check legislation.