

*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*



*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14, 2010

Senate Advances \$23.1 Billion State Operating Budget ***Senate Adopts \$500 million in Reductions to Balance Budget***

JEFFERSON CITY - Approving funding to run critical functions of state government without a tax increase, the Missouri Senate today advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$23.1 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include nearly \$500 million in reductions across the board from the budget proposed by Gov. Jay Nixon in January to meet the state's requirement for a balanced budget.

Senate Appropriations Chairman Sen. Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, handled the budget bills. Mayer said the cuts were necessary when considering that the state had nearly \$1 billion less coming into its state coffers compared to the same time last year.

"This is one of the toughest budget years in our state's history," said Mayer. "Missouri's constitution requires us to have a balanced budget. With an eye on our state's future, we made some difficult decisions to balance the budget and live within our means without raising taxes."

The Senate voted to maintain the school funding formula at its current levels. Missouri's K-12 schools will receive the same level of funding in FY2011 as they did this year. Mayer said the Senate approved funding of \$37.5 million for the Career Ladder program that pays teachers for extra work such as afterschool tutoring. The funding would be contingent on whether Missouri receives an additional \$300 million in federal "stimulus" dollars.

Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, commended Mayer for his leadership on the budget.

"Education leaders told us that they would like us to keep their core school formula funding intact," said Shields. "Sen. Mayer listened and protected our students in our classrooms by making sure our school districts will receive the same amount of money from the formula next year as they did this year."

The Senate also reduced Parents as Teachers funding by half or \$13 million. Another bill that has received Senate approval would continue to provide the first six visits to families for free to identify and get help to children with developmental delays.

The Senate voted to reduce higher education funding by the same level as the Governor's recommendation of \$50 million, keeping universities' promises intact to freeze tuition rates. They also reduced ACCESS Missouri Scholarships by \$13 million, but Mayer said this cut is not anticipated to touch the program's core funding.

"Missouri students will continue to benefit from ACCESS Missouri Scholarships," said Mayer. "There is only a small chance scholarship award amounts could be less next year."

Mayer said the largest savings, anticipated to be millions, came from looking at state departments and identifying how they may run more efficiently by eliminating more than 1,000 government jobs, including taxpayer-funded lobbyists, and items like equipment, travel and expenses.

"One of the consistent themes we heard from constituents is that we could and should do more with less, and I believe we are making this happen throughout state government," said Mayer.

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Mayer said the Senate also held the line on “new spending” items recommended by the governor’s office, including saying “no” to the following spending proposals:

- \$600,000 for WWII videos interviewing veterans.
- \$600,000 for a disparity study.
- \$730,000 for urban gardens and farmer’s markets, among several others.

The Senate also voted to cut its own operating budget by 5 percent, or nearly \$500,000.

“We can’t expect citizens to face cuts to programs and not expect to cut our budget,” said Sen. Kevin Engler, R-Farmington, and Senate Majority Floor Leader. “We are facing the second budget year in a row where we are working with less revenue than the year before, and we are leading by example by cutting our own expenses.”

Differences in the budget bills will now be hammered out by conference committees. Negotiated versions must return to the House before gaining Senate approval to advance to the governor. The budget must pass by 6 p.m., Friday, May 7, as required by the constitution.

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