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Senate President Pro Tem

Ron Richard
Speaker of the House

MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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Senate Advances \$23.3 Billion State Operating Budget *Legislature Adopts Nearly \$460 million in Reductions to Balance Budget*

JEFFERSON CITY - Approving funding to run critical functions of state government without a tax increase, the Missouri Legislature today advanced 13 budget bills totaling \$23.3 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include \$456 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 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 not spend more than we take in. With an eye on our state's future, we made some difficult decisions to live within our means without raising taxes."

"We fulfilled our responsibility to the people of Missouri to make the difficult decisions needed to continue down a fiscally conservative path," said House Budget Committee Chairman Allen Icet, R-Wildwood. "I am pleased to report that we have passed a balanced budget, on time and without raising taxes."

The General Assembly 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. Lawmakers also approved \$37.5 million for the Career Ladder program that pays teachers for extra work such as afterschool tutoring. The funding would pay teachers for work that has already been completed during the 2010 Fiscal Year.

Speaker Ron Richard, R-Joplin, praised House members for their dedication to balancing the state budget and keeping Missouri afloat in tough economic times.

"While many states across the nation are struggling to survive in our devastating economy, we made the tough decisions necessary to keep Missouri financially stable," said Richard. "It wasn't an easy process, but with the leadership of my budget chairman, Rep. Icet, we are presenting the governor with a balanced, responsible budget."

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 to our state's education leaders 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."

With universities maintaining their promises to freeze tuition rates for instate, undergraduate students, lawmakers were able to reduce higher education funding by the same level as the governor's recommendation of \$50 million. Legislators also reduced Access Missouri scholarships by \$13 million. Budget leaders said this cut is not anticipated to touch the program's core funding, meaning student scholarship award amounts are unlikely to shrink.

The largest savings, anticipated to be in the 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.

Mayer and Icet said they 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.

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

"We can't expect citizens to face cuts to programs and not expect to cut our own budget," said Senate Majority Floor Leader Kevin Engler, R-Farmington. "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."

This year's constitutional deadline to finish the budget was Friday, May 7 at 6 p.m. Lawmakers completed the budget more than one week in advance of this deadline, which hasn't been done in recent history.

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