



State Senator Ron Richard

District 32

SESSION REPORT

Legislature Passes One-Time Tax Amnesty Program

The state of Missouri is currently offering eligible taxpayers, including businesses, the chance to pay back delinquent taxes without having to pay the interest or penalties they would normally owe. Only taxes that were due on or before Dec. 31, 2014, are eligible, and no taxpayer who is a party to any tax-related criminal investigation or any civil or criminal litigation may participate.

To take advantage of this program, a taxpayer must apply for amnesty; pay the unpaid taxes in full before Nov. 30, 2015; and agree to comply with state tax laws for the next eight years. Also, if a taxpayer is granted amnesty, he or she will not be eligible to participate in any future amnesty programs for the same type of tax.

Starting the last week of August, the Missouri Department of Revenue (DOR) began mailing Amnesty Eligibility Notices to all the known individuals and businesses that qualify for tax amnesty. If you believe you qualify, but did not receive an eligibility notice, you may access the Missouri Tax Amnesty Application (Form 5607) on the DOR website.

Again, this is a one-time amnesty program. You will not be granted tax amnesty if you do not submit a completed application, if your application or eligibility notice is not signed or if your full payment is not postmarked by Nov. 30, 2015. For more information, call (573) 751-7200 or visit the DOR website at www.dor.mo.gov.

Welfare Reform Bill Takes Effect

For years, Missouri's welfare system provided such a high level of benefits that it actually discouraged work. In fact, repeated inaction by lawmakers to implement reform policies adopted by other states resulted in Missouri ranking dead-last in the country for welfare reform policies. As a result, modernizing our welfare policies and getting people back to work was a top priority for the Legislature this session.

By restructuring the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program and reinvesting any resulting savings back into child care, job training and transportation services, Senate Bill 24 will provide our state's welfare recipients with the motivation and resources they need to gain employment and become financially independent. The Legislature successfully voted to override the governor's veto of SB 24 while still in the regular legislative session.

Dear Constituents,

As my sixth year in the Missouri Senate approaches, it continues to be an honor serving the men, women and children who live in the 32nd District.

While there never seems to be quite enough time, my colleagues and I were able to pass a number of our priority measures - measures that will greatly improve Missouri's business climate, reform a broken welfare system and revitalize our agriculture industry, among many others.

Missouri lawmakers also passed one of the most fiscally conservative budgets I've seen in many years, and successfully voted to override 10 bills the governor had previously vetoed. I am truly proud of the work we were able to accomplish this past year.

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my Senate office if you have any questions about these issues or your state government.

Sincerely,

Ron Richard
State Senator

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Senator Richard Makes History

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, during the recent veto session, my Senate colleagues elected me to the position of president pro tem of the Missouri Senate for the remainder of the 98th General Assembly. This was truly a historic occasion, as I now have the honor of being the only legislator in state history to serve as both speaker of the House and president pro tem of the Senate. I am grateful knowing I have the trust and support of my fellow senators, and I intend to continue our tradition of honest hard work in the Senate.

As president pro tem, I will be responsible for appointing committee members, assigning legislation to committees and ruling on points of order raised during debate in the Senate Chamber, among other powers.



Pictured above, Sen. Ron Richard is sworn in as president pro tem of the Missouri Senate by Chief Justice Patricia Breckenridge on Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2015.

From the beginning of my career in the Missouri Legislature as a state representative to serving as speaker of the House and, most recently, as the majority floor leader, I have always strived to serve my constituents and the people of Missouri to the best of my abilities. I will continue those efforts in my new role as president pro tem, working to grow a robust economy, creating jobs and ensuring that the Show-Me State continues to be a great place to live, work and raise a family.

Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Breakdown

Passing a fiscally responsible and balanced budget is the most important task the Legislature undertakes each session, requiring months of hard work and focused discussion. Although we had until early May to pass the Fiscal Year 2016 spending plan, we were able to send the \$26.1 billion budget to the governor in late April.

This year's budget reflects lawmakers' commitment to funding our state's vital programs and services, taking care of our most vulnerable citizens, eliminating wasteful spending and passing a budget that Missouri taxpayers can actually afford. Fiscal Year 2016 runs from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2016.

Highlights from the FY 2016 \$26.1 billion budget:

- Record levels of funding for K-12 education, including an additional \$84 million;
- \$27.6 million increase in performance-based funding for state colleges and universities;
- A combined \$6.5 million funding increase for our community and state technical colleges;
- An additional \$2 million for the A+ Schools Program;
- \$28 million increase for the Victims of Crime Act;
- An additional \$20 million to SEMA for disaster funding;
- \$700,000 for the Amtrak operating expansion; and
- \$100,000 for the juvenile detention center in Joplin.

DISTRIBUTION OF EACH TAX DOLLAR FISCAL YEAR 2016 TRULY AGREED AND FINALLY PASSED OPERATING BUDGET All Funds: \$26.028 Billion



*Revenue, Office of Administration, Budget Officials, General Assembly, and Fiscal Facts

CREATING A BETTER BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

As a lawmaker, passing legislation that creates jobs and promotes a healthy, growing economy in the Show-Me State has always been a top priority of mine. I'm pleased to report the 2015 legislative session produced a number of measures that will further transform Missouri into the type of business-friendly state that attracts and retains top employers.

SENATE BILL 18 requires the Department of Revenue to notify sellers if there has been a change in the interpretation of sales or use tax laws that modifies which items of personal property or services are taxable.

SENATE BILL 19 specifies a process for determining what portion of a corporation's income is taxable in Missouri for sales of real property or rentals of tangible personal property, rentals of licenses of intangible property, and sales of intangible property.

SENATE BILL 20 creates a tax exemption for materials and utilities used by commercial laundries.

SENATE BILL 149 creates state and local tax exemptions for new and existing data storage centers in Missouri. To be eligible, data centers must meet specific job creation and investment requirements.

SENATE BILL 194 extends the date by which certain employee-owned businesses must build a new facility or expand an existing facility to qualify for business facility tax credits from Jan. 1, 2020, to Jan. 1, 2025.

SENATE BILL 336 specifies that for employees who earn tips, the amount of income the employer should withhold for tax purposes shall be based on the total tips reported to the employer on the employee's written statement. The act also relieves employers of liability for any amount of under-reported tips by an employee.

HOUSE BILL 514 modifies provisions relating to tax increment financing for the redevelopment of a former automobile manufacturing plant or former insurance company in St. Louis County, and the retention of a federal organization employing over 2,000 geospatial-intelligence jobs in St. Louis City.

Protecting our Public Buildings

When it comes to ensuring the safety of our state workers, providing for the future education of our students and preserving the integrity of our state parks and historic sites, we must act in a timely manner. Putting off necessary repairs and delaying important expansion projects not only poses safety risks, but also stifles education and economic development.

Thanks to low interest rates and Missouri's excellent bond rating, investors are quick to purchase state bonds when they are offered. I'm proud to say Missouri legislators sent a package of bonding bills to the governor this year that will provide critical funding for repairs and renovations to many of our state-owned buildings and facilities, including:

- \$310 million for new maintenance and repair projects;
- \$150 million for repairs of state-owned buildings, of which \$40 million will go toward repairing the deteriorating state Capitol building; and
- \$160 million in repairs for higher education facilities, of which \$6.7 million will go to Missouri Southern State University for repairs and renovations, including laboratory renovations in Reynolds Hall.

Promoting Agriculture in Missouri

This session, lawmakers passed legislation that will help alleviate burdensome and costly regulations, making it easier for Missouri's agricultural community to remain competitive and, most importantly, to continue feeding and fueling our state, nation and beyond.

Senate Bill 12, an omnibus agriculture measure, changes the definition of "processing Urban Agricultural Zones" to include produce; adds livestock to the current milk exemption for weight limitations on highways; allows weight limitations on shipping grains and co-grains to be exceeded by as much as 10 percent during harvest; and keeps the state from turning a profit on the backs of farmers by prohibiting the Department of Agriculture from charging more in license fees than the cost of inspection, among several other provisions.

We also passed Senate Bill 500, which will provide some much-needed regulatory relief for Missouri's beekeepers and small, local honey producers so they can continue providing this safe, tasty and natural product to consumers.

State Senator Ron Richard

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2015 Veto Session Recap

Missouri lawmakers returned to Jefferson City in September for the General Assembly's annual veto session. In total, the Legislature voted to override 10 of the governor's vetoes. Successful overrides from this year's veto session include:

- **HOUSE BILL 150**, tying the duration of unemployment benefits to the state's unemployment rate;
- **HOUSE BILL 722**, prohibiting cities and counties from adopting certain types of ordinances, including minimum wage increases that exceed state law and bans on plastic shopping bags;
- **HOUSE BILL 618**, regarding the disposition of human remains and the electronic vital records system;
- **HOUSE BILL 878**, relating to the licensing and commissioning of corporate security advisors by the Department of Public Safety;
- **HOUSE BILL 1022**, authorizing a return of premiums paid by insureds;
- **HOUSE BILL 1098**, allowing trust companies to operate under modern laws;
- **SENATE BILL 20**, creating a tax exemption for materials and utilities used by commercial laundries;
- **SENATE BILL 142**, requiring the Department of Natural Resources to prepare an implementation impact report when submitting certain plans to the Environmental Protection Agency;
- **SENATE BILL 224**, requiring a student to be a United States citizen or permanent resident in order to be eligible to receive reimbursements from the A+ Schools Program; and
- **SENATE BILL 345**, allowing lenders to increase the fee on loans lasting 30 days or longer from \$75 to \$100.

Welcoming Visitors to the Capitol

Each year, I have the great privilege of meeting with hundreds of constituents who make the trip up to Jefferson City. I am always eager to hear your thoughts and ideas on state government, most especially when they are coming from our young people - the future leaders of our state. If you plan on visiting Missouri's beautiful Capitol during session, which is held from early January to mid-May, please contact my office and make arrangements to meet with me.



Pictured above, Sen. Ron Richard with students at the Capitol on Feb. 4. The students were participating in the National History Day education program.