

The Mayer Report



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The 'State of Our State'

JANUARY 27TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

The 'State of Our State'

By *Rob Mayer*

It was an address heard throughout the state, but the reality of Missouri's dire budget situation for me, hits close to home. In the governor's annual state of the state address last week, he laid out his priorities for the Fiscal Year 2012 state budget. With a \$300-\$500 deficit, many difficult decisions have to be made this year, and I do not take the task of balancing our state's budget lightly.

For the third year in a row, our state is going into the budget process with a shortfall. With more than 280,000 Missourians out of work, it's time our state was presented a balanced and accountable budget – not one that relies on special legislation to pass in order for it to be balanced nor one that is dependent on hundreds of millions of dollars in federal budget stabilization extensions. Put simply, our state's constitution requires us not to spend more than we take in.

In my opening day address, I presented my colleagues with several solutions to our state's budget problems: put Missourians back to work, invest in educating our future workforce, and shrink the size and scope of state government. We need to look to long-term solutions, NOT propping up our state's budget with one-time federal bailout dollars that come to an end this year.

As Senate leader, I'm dedicated to protecting taxpayers while focusing on K-12 education, higher education and health care. Spurring job creation in our state is another

main focus, and in the Senate we have a comprehensive plan that will make it easier to do business in our state — allowing current companies to expand and attracting new businesses to the Show-Me State. We can do this by capping the corporate franchise tax, restoring balance to employment law in regard to the Missouri Human Rights Act, addressing our state’s “whistleblower” provisions, fixing a judicial decision in Missouri that had a negative effect on our workers’ compensation system, and making Missouri a “Right to Work” state.

I’ve made it my top priority to help get Missourians back to work. With much legislative effort during the 2010 regular session, and again during the 2010 special session, lawmakers passed House Bill 2 — better known as the Manufacturing Jobs Act. The legislation provides tax incentives for qualified auto suppliers or manufacturing facilities that create or retain Missouri jobs. Though it can apply to several companies in our state, this act was aimed at enticing the Ford Motor Company to manufacture a new product line at its existing automotive assembly plant in Claycomo, a suburb of Kansas City.

On Jan. 18, the Ford Motor Company signed a memorandum of understanding with our state, committing to invest at least \$400 million to bring a next-generation production line to the Kansas City facility. This action will retain 3,750 jobs — jobs that will remain in our state, help boost our economy, and invest in Missourians who can now compete with other states regarding production jobs for the future.

However, this is far from where we need to be in our state in terms of promoting job growth and offering incentives to expand and attract new businesses to our state. We need to do more. Since June 2008, our state has lost nearly 104,000 jobs, one out of every six Missourians are currently receiving food stamps, and the number of citizens settling for part-time jobs has doubled in the past two years to approximately 150,000 Missourians — hard-working Missourians who need full-time jobs.

As the Senate and House work through their respective budget plans for 2012, I will keep you informed on how my colleagues and I allocate your hard-earned taxpayer dollars for vital functions of our state government. It’s crucial to get your input on how Missouri can best utilize these dollars and reduce the scope of state government, so keep your ideas coming through the Senate’s “Rebooting Government” website (www.senate.mo.gov/RebootMO). On this site, you can also listen to various members of the Senate present their recommendations for their respective work groups. You can also view a PowerPoint listing many of the work groups’ suggestions.

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