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Progress On Extending Unemployment

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Progress On Extending Unemployment

By ROB MAYER

Last week we made great progress on extending unemployment benefits for Missouri families who have reached, and those nearing, the 79 week cut-off. Today we are expected to vote to extend those benefits to 99 weeks thanks to an agreement reached in the Senate.

We all share the frustration with the federal government's continued overspending and mounting federal deficit. But, for the majority of the Senate, we believed it was important to extend benefits for Missouri families while they continue to look for work in this great recession. That is why we worked to craft a twofold compromise that includes identifying and working to eliminate the appropriations of \$250 million of federal stimulus spending projects in Missouri. That means looking at re-appropriations in the governor's budget recommendations for House Bill 18 and identifying ways we can truly reduce the spending of federal stimulus dollars in our state.

The second part of the agreement we struck reduces Missouri's state share of initial unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. This change does not affect current recipients of benefits. Currently, Missouri has borrowed nearly \$1 billion from the federal government to sustain its unemployment fund. By shrinking the timeline of the state's benefits, we will reduce the burden on businesses to offset the additional federal taxes that will be placed on them to pay off that debt. Reducing that burden will allow businesses to retain their current employees as well as expand.

Last week the Senate also unanimously adopted Senate Bill 351 that would make information more accessible to adoptees. The bill would allow, upon consent of both biological parents, or upon their death, the ability to obtain vital identifying information of the parents. The bill would also remove the requirement of adult adoptees to obtain consent of his or her adoptive parents before requesting information concerning his or her biological parents.

I would also like to congratulate all the winners from last Tuesday's local elections. Running for office and serving the public is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. From our local school boards that help our teachers educate our children to local governments that help run our cities, we should all appreciate their selfless work. Congratulations to last Tuesday's winners.

Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments, questions, or issues using the information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, represents the 25th State Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and serves the state as the President Pro Tem of the State Senate.

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