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Busy Week In State Senate

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Busy Week In State Senate

By Rob Mayer

This week in the Missouri Senate we tackled the state operating budget, efforts to protect animal agriculture and criminal code revisions to domestic violence laws.

The Missouri Senate this week amended and passed 13 budget bills totaling \$23.2 billion that make up the state operating budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The approved funding will run the critical functions of state government without a tax increase and include a \$6 million net reduction in spending from the budget proposed by the governor in January. Our budget also prioritized education with \$20 million increases for K-12 busing and Missouri's two and four-year colleges and universities.

By lessening the governor's 7 percent cut to only 4.8 percent, we allow our colleges and universities to find and pass on real savings to out-of-pocket expenses students would have incurred. And by shoring up funding for K-12 transportation, we help prevent local schools from having to raid funding for our classrooms or other dollars directed to education. The Senate also voted to maintain K-12 school funding at its current level for the coming budget year and we voted to accept an additional \$189 million in federal funding to go toward that effort.

I commend our Appropriations chairman and the Senate for continuing our commitment to education. This budget protects our students in our K-12 classrooms and goes further by finding even more funding — where the governor could not — for school transportation and our students attending Missouri's community colleges and universities.

Differences in the House and Senate versions of the budget bills will now be ironed out by lawmakers in 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 6, as required by the constitution.

Support For Animal Agriculture

We also saw hundreds — if not a thousand — Missourians turn out from across the state at the Capitol Wednesday to show their support for animal agriculture. The governor’s signature is all that stands in the way of reforming Missouri’s dog breeding industry while protecting it as a viable profession for Missourians. More than 65 lawmakers, 10 agriculture community representatives, and all those that turned out Wednesday are calling on the governor to sign Senate Bill 113 & 95 into law.

This bill still represents the best hope to repair the damage Proposition B would do to the dog breeding industry and Missouri agriculture. The governor has proposed a new compromise, but his signature on Senate Bill 113 & 95 is paramount in developing goodwill with lawmakers for us to advance his compromise language so late in the legislative session. It was great to see so many come out and support agriculture as a way of life in our great state. I hope the governor takes the immense turnout in support of animal agriculture to heart as he makes his decision.

Strengthening Domestic Violence Laws

We also voted unanimously to approve legislation that would strengthen domestic violence laws throughout the state of Missouri. Senate Bill 320 would provide consistency by updating definitions, improving protections available to victims and increasing the accountability for offenders.

The goal of this legislation is to make Missouri a safer place to live by providing a more meaningful order of protection process for women, children and all victims of domestic violence. In order to make Missouri’s domestic violence laws the most effective, we need to provide courts and law enforcement officers with clear, consistent definitions. The legislation does that and is based on recommendations made by a special Domestic Violence Task Force that met last year to suggest and analyze improvements to law enforcement procedures and the courts system.

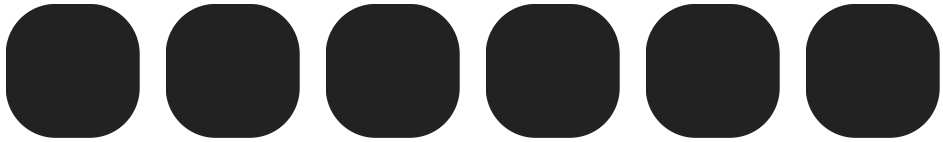
Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments, questions, or issues using the information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

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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