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Floods, Redistricting, “Solution” & Incentives

MAY 02ND 2011 BY STAFF WRITER

Floods, Redistricting, “Solution” & Incentives

As severe storms, tornadoes, and massive flooding blanketed parts of the southeast Missouri, many of our families and neighbors have been devastated. Our communities have gone above and beyond to help their friends and neighbors in need during this difficult and unpredictable time. Area residents of Poplar Bluff and now farmers across the Bootheel have been evacuated from their homes to emergency shelters.

Local and national agencies, including the State Highway Patrol, State Emergency Management Agency and the American Red Cross, are working to help Missourians affected by flooding. Plus, approximately 200 National Guard members are on the ground to assist in continued evacuation and patrol of evacuated areas. I praise the members of these agencies and others who have been working with local officials to help Missourians with the most basic necessities — food, clean water, shelter, and clothing — which we often take for granted. As I toured these areas and keep mindful watch on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ decision of whether or not to breach Missouri River levies, I pray families receive the help they need and find the strength to recover from this recent string of storms and flooding.

If you need assistance, or want to help those in need, please contact the **Southeast Missouri Chapter of the American Red Cross** at (573) 335-9471.

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We also completed our constitutional duty and crafted a map that is fair and equitable to Missouri citizens when it comes to their representation in the U.S. Congress. Last

Wednesday we gave final approval to the Conference Committee Report for House Bill 193. The new map of congressional districts is based on data from the most recent census. While Missouri's population grew 7 percent, other states grew at faster rates, meaning Missouri is losing a congressional seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, resulting in a drop from nine to eight seats.

The map we adopted reflects the best interests of all Missourians. We crafted a map that both Republicans and Democrats voted yes for because it appropriately and fairly represents Missouri's citizens. Unfortunately, the governor vetoed the map this weekend. But we expect an attempt to override his veto of a map that has bipartisan support.

An update to last week's efforts by the animal agriculture community is that we heard and passed Senate Bill 161. The bill is often referred to as the "Missouri Solution" to the debate on laws regulating the dog breeding industry in our state. Following its passage in the House and Senate, the governor quickly signed the measure into law thereby codifying new laws going after unlicensed breeders and putting in place common sense regulations for licensed dog breeders to follow when caring for their animals.

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In the Senate, we also gave initial approval to House Bill 116. The measure would overhaul the state's tax incentive programs for an estimated \$1.5 billion in taxpayer savings over the next 15 years. The bill also includes new business tax incentives, such as "Compete Missouri" and encourages foreign trade in Missouri by establishing the "Aerotropolis Trade Incentive and Tax Credit Act." That particular tax credit is designed to turn Lambert - St. Louis International Airport into an international trade hub with exports and imports moving through our state. This trade hub would open up many new markets for Missouri's agricultural producers. In addition, the bill also includes a proposal authorizing a new state fund offering incentives to invest in science and technology research and companies throughout Missouri.

I will continue to keep you apprised of issues important to the people of the 25th Senatorial District and all Missourians. Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments or questions using the information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

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Busy Week In State Senate

APRIL 22ND 2011 BY NEWS

[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.

<images/Blog Images/Local News/show/uiid>

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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Clarifying Proposition B In Missouri

APRIL 18TH 2011 BY NEWS

Clarifying Proposition B In Missouri

By Rob Mayer

The Missouri General Assembly last week gave its final approval to a measure that would create a new crime targeting unlicensed dog breeders, as well as strengthening the guidelines and increasing the number of inspections of licensed dog breeders in Missouri. The bill now moves to the governor's desk for his signature.

Many of you know last fall, by a very narrow margin, urban voters in Missouri passed Proposition B — a citizen-led petition against dog breeders in the state of Missouri. It was important the Legislature clarify provisions in Proposition B to allow this industry to continue.

We all want puppies and dogs to be bred and raised under healthy and safe conditions. That is why we have created a new crime and funding mechanism to hire more inspectors to go after and shut down unlicensed breeders in our state. We also build on the will of the people by making sure licensed breeders must follow common-sense guidelines to protect the health and well-being of their dogs and new puppies.

It is estimated there are more than 1,500 unlicensed breeding facilities in Missouri. Senate Bill 113 & 95 makes it a crime to operate without a license, allowing the Attorney General, circuit attorney, or local prosecutor to file charges against offenders. The bill also dramatically increases veterinarian involvement and breeding facilities must keep sale and veterinarian records for two years on every dog. Important to other livestock producers, the measure changes the definition of "pet" to only apply to dogs.

[H3]Redistricting Work Continues[/h3]

This week the Legislature will continue their work on the congressional redistricting process. This task is especially difficult this year because Missouri has lost a seat of congressional representation as our state's population grew by only 7 percent in the last census. This takes us from nine to eight seats in the U.S. House. It is our job to decide how to divide the state evenly to reflect shifting populations. Every legislative district will change in some way in order to ensure that each district has 748,615 people, or as close to that number as feasible.

Last week, the Senate adopted a substitute map when debating HB 193, the map submitted by the House. I believe the map adopted by the Senate, of the two, best represents the people of the 8th Congressional District. I would like to see our community

mindedness and area values remain intact. I look forward to advancing a map that is fair and equitable and protects the core values of our district. For more details or to view the maps, visit www.ao.mo.gov/bp/redistricting.

Auditing Large Agencies

In addition, the Senate passed a bill I support last week that now moves to the House for similar consideration. Senate Bill 323 would have the state auditor conduct a one-time comparative audit of several of the largest state agencies in Missouri. Then, the auditor would compare the fiscal practices of these agencies and submit a report recommending cost-saving measures to be used in all state agencies. This comparative audit has the potential to identify millions in taxpayer savings.

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Progress On Extending Unemployment

APRIL 11TH 2011 BY NEWS

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.

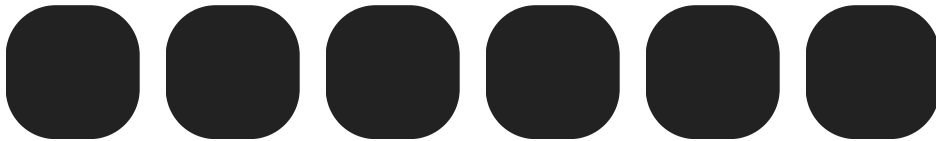
Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments, questions, or issues using the information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

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Update from Jefferson City

APRIL 05TH 2011 BY NEWS

Update from Jefferson City

By Rob Mayer Last week the Missouri Senate gave first round approval to]Senate Bill 65 that would prevent the abortion of unborn babies of the gestational age of 20 weeks or more that are determined by a physician to be viable outside of the womb.

The legislation would, with the exception of a medical emergency, require the physician to determine the gestational age of the unborn child before performing an abortion. If the doctor determines the baby is 20 weeks or more, the physician would test for viability. If viable, no abortion could be performed unless it is necessary to preserve the life of the woman.

Protecting the sanctity of life has been, and will remain, one of my top priorities while serving in the Missouri General Assembly and I am glad to see this important measure move forward. I expect the Senate will give second round approval this week and send the bill to the House for similar consideration.

The Senate has also begun one of the most important discussions we can have this year – reforming tax credits.

Senate Bill 280 is a measure that couples tax credit reform with the “Compete Missouri” economic development program. The bill would cap and sunset current tax credit programs, including historical preservation and low-income housing tax credits, while combining six current programs to create “Compete Missouri” that is a performance-based credit program that gives the Department of Economic Development flexibility in providing upfront funds with claw back provisions if a deal falls through.

We must pass tax credit reforms to reign in spending in these difficult budget years and ensure that every dollar we invest is generating a positive return.

As spring finally begins to break through this long winter season, many of us take to the roads to experience new places while our road crews, engineers and construction workers get to work on building and repairing our roadways.

As we set out on our journeys, we should be mindful of being safe when we travel, especially when it comes to work zones we may encounter.

This week the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) is helping celebrate National Work Zone Safety Awareness Week. As a part of the week’s events, taking place

from April 4-8, the Southeast District of MoDOT enlisted the help of area legislators for a Work Zone Awareness Wall of Fame on Flickr.

I joined in these activities to help make people aware of the importance of slowing down and staying attentive when driving through a work zone. I was happy to be a participant, and I applaud these efforts to save lives on our roads and highways.

I donned an orange “Arrive Alive” shirt as a part of the Southeast Missouri MoDOT District’s Work Zone Awareness Wall of Fame.

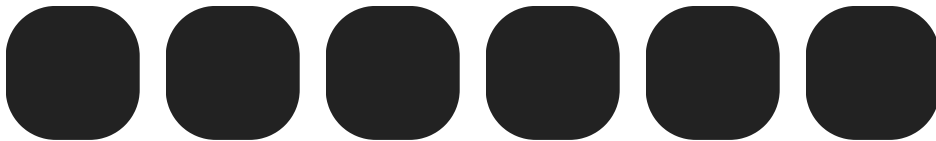
Interactive events throughout the week include a "Where in the District is Barrel Bob?" contest and public service announcements by road workers and their families. More information about National Work Zone Awareness Week is available at www.modot.org/southeast.

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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