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Legislative Session Scorecard

MAY 16TH 2011 BY NEWS

Legislative Session Scorecard

By Rob Mayer As the 2011 Legislative Session came to a close Friday evening, it was clear we advanced a number of key. This was possible because senators worked together to find common sense solutions to the problems that face the people of Missouri.

We began this session with two goals – passing a balanced budget Missouri taxpayers could sustain without a tax increase and putting people back to work. The Senate worked together to pass a balanced budget on-time that protects taxpayers, passed several job creation initiatives, restored funding for K-12 busing and higher education, and crafted a new congressional district map that is fair and equitable.

As the final gavel fell, lawmakers had sent three bills to the governor aimed at assisting businesses in their ability to hire more employees.

The first, Senate Bill 19, has already been signed by the governor. The new law first freezes and then phases out Missouri's corporate franchise tax over a five-year period. The bill takes effect Aug. 28. By phasing out this double taxation on employers, we eliminate a disincentive that penalized companies for investing more in our state. I was glad the governor joined us in our effort to allow companies to invest in hiring new employees instead of growing government through higher taxes.

Last month, we also passed and the governor signed into law a bill that extended unemployment benefits for more than 10,000 Missouri families who had reached, and those nearing, the 79-week cut-off. House Bill 163 also included a reduction to Missouri's

share of initial unemployment benefits from 26 weeks to 20 weeks. The federal government has spent Missouri businesses into an almost \$1 billion debt when it comes to unemployment benefits. With this change, we reduced the future burden on businesses to offset the additional federal taxes that will be placed on Missouri businesses to pay off that debt. But more importantly, this will encourage businesses to hire and expand, creating new jobs.

Our third measure, Senate Bill 188, was unfortunately vetoed by the governor. The bill would change state laws to mirror federal employment laws when it comes to discrimination. We want Missouri employees to be protected from employers who break the law. The best way to do this is by having our inharmonious state laws changed to mirror the provisions set out in the historic Civil Rights Act. The bill would give employers and employees certainty across the board when it comes to their day in court. We will most likely move to override the governor's veto in the annual veto session held in September.

As I noted last week, we also advanced 13 budget bills totaling \$23.2 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

Other bills to advance this session include:

- A ballot question and enabling legislation to let voters decide if Missourians should be required to show photo identification at the polls (SJR2 and SB3);
[li]“The Missouri Solution” representing a compromise to last year’s Prop B requirements for Missouri dog breeders. The governor signed both SB113 & 95 and HB161 last month. Lawmakers passed and the governor signed SB187 ending nuisance lawsuit abuses against Missouri farm families.
- Two identical bills, HB213 and SB65 (that I sponsored), would prevent late-term abortions.
- HB641 outlaws “bath salts,” a synthetic drug that mimics the effects of cocaine, and other controlled substances know as K3 that mimic marijuana.
- HB73 requires drug testing for TANF recipients, with those testing positive to complete a drug treatment program and not test positive again in order to regain their benefits.
- And HB412 extends the sunset on the Missouri Prescription Drug Program that assists more than 225,000 Missouri low-income seniors and the disabled in purchasing drugs under the Medicare Part D program. Full funding, or \$19.6 million, was included in the budget.

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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