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New Session Holds Challenges In 2012

JANUARY 09TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

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By Rob Mayer

Wednesday, January 4th we returned to the capitol for the beginning of the second regular session of the 96th General Assembly. As Senate Leader, I gave the opening day address that outlined the priorities we plan to pass this year to improve your daily lives. (Audio and video of the address are available on my multimedia page by clicking here.)

We want to swiftly pass a balanced budget without a tax increase for the people of Missouri and to help put Missourians back to work in this stagnant and weak economy. Missouri's taxpayers and workforce deserve nothing less.

One of our toughest challenges this year will again be crafting a state budget that spends no more than the state takes in through revenue collections. As we weather the biggest economic recession since the Great Depression, Missouri is one of a few states in good financial condition. That said, slow revenue growth, increased mandatory expenses in programs like Medicaid, and the end of more than \$400 million in one-time federal stabilization dollars means we could be forced to make further reductions in the upcoming budget that begins July 1.

We are prepared to make tough decisions. But, we first need a governor that will present an honest budget forecast – no matter how unpopular – and then recommend a budget that is balanced. That includes not basing his balanced budget on special legislation that must pass. At the end of the day, we must all be committed to reducing the size and scope of

state government so taxpayers can afford to sustain it without a tax increase.

Education will continue to be a priority for us in funding and resources. Every student deserves an equal opportunity for a world-class education and the Senate will work to make sure that happens for every Missouri student, especially those currently trapped in failing school districts.

We will also continue our efforts to help put Missourians back to work in good paying jobs with benefits. While the number of unemployed Missourians has decreased, it is still too high. That is why we must tear down the walls that are economic barriers to all Missouri businesses –big and small – so they can invest in hiring new employees. Our plan in the Senate starts by curbing excessive regulations, restoring balance to employment law and returning the Workers’ Compensation System as the exclusive remedy for workplace accidents.

We have much to do this year and will work together to do what is in the best interest of all Missourians.

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

Rob Mayer of Dexter represents the 25th Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and is the Senate President Pro Tem.

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