



TOP

Senate Advances Bills To The House

FEBRUARY 01ST 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Senate Advances Bills To The House

By Rob Mayer

The Senate has been hard at work and last week advanced the first two bills of the year to the House of Representatives. We have also continued work on our priority bills that we believe will improve Missouri's business climate.

The first bill we tackled would bring more transparency to tracking how your taxpayer dollars are spent. [Senate Bill 467](#), sponsored by Sen. Brian Munzlinger, R-Williamstown, would require state entities accepting grants more than \$1 million to post information regarding the grants on the [Missouri Accountability Portal](#). The portal is an online resource for the public to search Missouri's government financial records.

With the bill, the portal would show you the amounts, origins, and usage of federal grant funds awarded to state departments and agencies. Plus, you would be able to track distribution, as well as repayment of bonds issued by public higher education institutions and tax increment financing obligations. The bill would also require the governor to submit daily reports to the portal of the amounts withheld from the state operating budget. Taxpayers deserve to know where the governor is holding back spending the Legislature has approved and this step will make his actions public, and therefore, more accountable.

The second measure we sent to the House brings state law in line with federal transportation regulations, keeping millions of transportation dollars in our state. [Senate Bill 443](#), sponsored by Sen. Bill Stouffer, R-Napton, allows the issuance of limited driving privileges to repeat offenders in order to drive to work, school, rehabilitation

services, or when seeking services to install a device that measures a driver's blood alcohol content. The bill also addresses several issues pertaining to the Uniform Commercial Driver's License Act, as well as other provisions regarding failure to appear in court for commercial driver's license holders, and implements federal guidelines concerning medical certification requirements for commercial drivers.

Making sure we meet federal transportation guidelines in these areas means Missouri can keep \$30 million of federal transportation funding in our state in the first year. These changes could lead up to Missouri annually keeping an additional \$60 million in highway safety funding.

As these two bills advance to the House for similar consideration, we are also hard at work on the priority bills I outlined at the start of session that will help put Missourians back to work. This week, we hope to conclude debate and pass [Senate Bill 592](#) that would change state laws to mirror federal employment laws when it comes to discrimination.

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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Senate Gets to Work on Jobs Bills

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Senate Gets to Work on Jobs Bills

By Rob Mayer

In my opening day address, I outlined how the Senate's plan to help put Missourians back to work starts with three measures. These ideas are not what you call "headline grabbing," but when we talk with small business owners they says its changes like these that will allow them to invest more in growing their businesses and hiring new employees.

I am proud to report the Senate has already held public hearings on all three of these priority measures.

The first idea, Senate Bill 469, moves Missouri business owners a step close to greater freedom from excessive and burdensome state rules and regulations.

Few things can bring private sector growth to a halt more quickly than overly contrived red tape. That is why this bill would require state agencies to review and reconsider regulations on a regular basis. The bill would give each regulation a limited shelf life of ten years, increase agency accountability, and improve legislative oversight.

The second idea, Senate Bill 592, 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. We can best do this by raising our standards to meet the provisions set out in the historic Civil Rights Act giving employers and workers better certainty across the board when it comes to their day in court.

Bringing certainty to these laws means businesses can spend less money on expansive legal fees and instead invest those dollars towards expanding their businesses.

The third idea, Senate Bill 572, would restore protections for co-employees from personal lawsuits for their role in honest accidents at work, return Workers' Compensation as the exclusive remedy for workplace accidents and address Missouri's insolvent Second Injury Fund.

This bill presents real solutions to problems facing our state’s workforce and their employers. Ending lawsuit abuses, relieving the need for additional insurance to cover honest accidents at work, and protecting injured workers while keeping costs reasonable for employers are all important to making sure Missouri businesses can grow and hire more employees.

I appreciate the swift work by our sponsoring senators and the members of the committees who considered these bills. It is important we act timely on these priorities to help put Missourians back to work in good paying jobs with benefits. I look forward to the full Senate considering these important bills in the coming weeks.

You may have also heard about the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) decision to close 259 offices and labs across the country. This closure of offices includes several here in Missouri and one in our backyard – the Natural Resource Conservation Service Office (NRCS) in Dexter.

The USDA says staff will keep their jobs, but work from other area offices that will stay open. These closures may impact my fellow farmers and ranchers and I encourage you to share any concerns you may have with your local USDA officials.

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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New Session Holds Challenges In 2012

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New Session Holds Challenges In 2012

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.

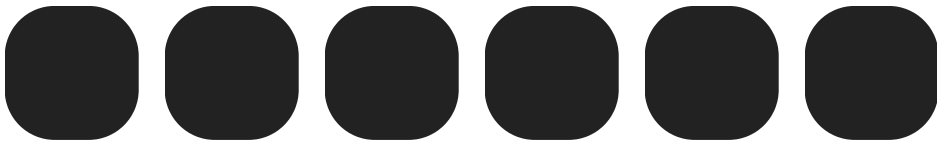
Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments, questions, or issues at the contact information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

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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State Senate Continues To Move Forward

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State Senate Continues To Move Forward

By Rob Mayer

Last week we ended the special session called by the governor that began Sept. 6. We understand the importance of working together to address Missouri's high unemployment rate and an on-going budget crisis. That is why the Senate worked diligently to pass an economic development bill coupled with tax credit reform that both Republicans and Democrats supported the first week of special session. The bill would have saved taxpayers nearly \$1 billion over 15 years while securing the future of innovative and financially responsible tax incentive programs to help keep and bring jobs and businesses to Missouri.

Unfortunately, the House and Senate could not philosophically see eye-to-eye on all the components of this massive bill.

While I am disappointed that economic development/tax credit reform legislation did not become law this special session, I believe we will continue to move forward with earnest and fruitful discussions to identify solid public policy protecting Missouri taxpayers in the coming months — with meaningful legislation in 2012 as the result.

During special session we passed two bills that were signed by the governor. With an objective to clear up confusion displayed by concerned parties, **SB 1** requires school districts to submit written policies concerning student-employee communication by March 1, 2012, with emphasis on the district's stance regarding the use of electronic media and the Internet for communication. The goals of these policies are to prevent inappropriate communication from occurring between school employees and children.

Another special session bill to receive the governor's stamp of approval is **SB 7**, that I sponsored. With a purpose to attract science and innovation companies to Missouri, this bill creates the Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act, popularly known as MOSIRA.

This interim, in response to the many natural disasters our state witnessed this year, I created the **Senate Interim Committee on Natural Disaster Recovery** to identify the best ways we can legislatively and financially assist our state in recovery efforts. Three subcommittees focused on emergency, fiscal, and insurance response and held hearings across the state.

The Subcommittee on Emergency Response had the responsibility of focusing on the physical response to a natural disaster, such as disaster relief, emergency crews, and utility crews. The Fiscal Response Subcommittee explored who pays for cleanup and care of affected areas until the vicinity can resume productivity. The Subcommittee on Insurance Response assumed the task of examining how impacted individuals and businesses file insurance claims and how those claims are addressed by insurance companies, as well as the qualities that define a disaster in order for insurance companies to provide compensation. The final report detailing the committee's work is available online [here](#).

Last week I appointed Brett Dorton of Dexter to serve on the **Joint Interim Committee on State Employee Wages**. Brett is one of two citizens selected to serve on the panel. Attracting and maintaining a talented and dedicated workforce is essential to providing critical state services to our citizens. I believe Brett's background in the private banking industry will provide the panel with beneficial information on how to develop strategies for providing fair wages and benefit packages to Missouri's state employees. Members of the panel are responsible for comparing the wages of Missouri state employees to other state employees throughout the country, studying and developing strategies for increasing the wages of Missouri's state employees, and reporting its findings to the House and Senate budget committees by Dec. 31, 2011.

I also had the honor of helping pay tribute at the memorial highway naming and sign dedication for State Representative Otto Bean, Jr. naming Highway 25 in Dunklin and Stoddard Counties from US 412 to Routes U and Z the Representative Otto Bean Jr. Memorial Highway. He was a dear friend, wonderful person and dedicated representative and it was fitting that we gathered to dedicate this token of our district's admiration for his life and service. It's a special honor and I am glad each time I pass by these signs, I and so many others will remember this great man.

I was also happy to join in the Mid-America Express event in late August to celebrate the completion of the Route 67 project. The project included upgrading the route to four lanes from north of Poplar Bluff to Fredericktown in Madison County.

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

Links Of Interest

[Otto Bean Jr. Highway Dedication](#)

[Mid-America Express](#)

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Mayer Returns to Jeff City for Special Session

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When lawmakers return to Jefferson City in September for the annual veto session, they may also address issues that will be a part of the First Extraordinary Session of the 96th General Assembly.

As was the case last year, when the governor called the Legislature back to the Capitol, jobs and economic development will be the focal point again this year. What makes this special session different from last years, instead of a bill aimed at one company, all of Missouri is said benefit from the items on the agenda.

Proponents of the newest “eco devo” legislation say the total package could save Missouri \$1.5 billion over the next decade. This proposal includes several key elements that have been worked out by a number of folks since the regular legislative session ended in May.

Limiting Tax Credits

At the top of the list is tax credit reform. The Low-Income Housing and Historic Preservation tax credit programs could see reductions, as could other tax credits that were mentioned by the governor’s Tax Credit Review Commission, which met last year. Many folks are disappointed these credits are not part of the appropriations process. In other words, when lawmakers put together the state’s budget, the money that goes toward tax credits is not figured in. I have often said if tax credits were a part of the budget, may not even exist.

Creating a Trade Hub with China

These cost reductions listed above would help fund the “Aerotropolis Trade Incentive Act,” which supporters say will help Lambert-St. Louis International Airport become a major trade hub. Over a 15-year period, \$360 million in tax credits would be utilized to make this a reality. Many believe this will help move agriculture products overseas. Others say trade with China is a losing game for the United States and we should support existing infrastructure, not just a handful of investors.

More Spending in Missouri

Also included in the proposal are incentives to get amateur sporting events and data centers into Missouri. Some say these are beneficial ideas that would boost the economy for towns of every size. In addition, the “Missouri Science and Innovation Reinvestment Act” (MOSIRA) is designed to start the process of creating high-paying 21st century jobs that could put Missouri ahead of several states, in terms of job growth, retention and

creation. Some worry MOSIRA funding may lead to unethical bioscience research. Others believe public investment in the private industry is the wrong way to go.

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