



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 27, 2005

Senate Advances \$19.2 Billion State Operating Budget
Lawmakers Support \$113 million Increase for K-12 Education

JEFFERSON CITY – Approving funding to run critical functions of state government with an emphasis on protecting children, the Missouri Senate today advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$19.2 billion for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The bills include a \$113 million increase for elementary and secondary education, fully funding the First Steps program offering early intervention services to 8,000 developmentally disabled infants and toddlers, and allocating \$37 million more for Medicaid services compared to last year to provide health care and mental services to Missouri’s senior citizens, disabled and working parents.

Senator Chuck Gross, R-St. Charles, chairs the Senate Appropriations Committee and handled the budget bills in the Senate.

“This budget reflects our state’s priorities and funds the areas of government at the level our taxpayers can afford,” Gross said. “This will make sure Missouri’s children will not lose out on health care as well as help more than 900,000 Missourians when it comes to their medical needs.”

The Senate upped eligibility levels for both seniors and the disabled as well as working parents compared to the House plan. A bill passed earlier this year requires Medicaid services be funded at the federal minimum levels which is 74 percent for seniors and the disabled. However, the Senate approved funding seniors and the disabled who earn up to 85 percent of the federal poverty level or \$677 a month for a single person. The Senate also funded working parents at 50 percent or \$670 a month for a family of three, higher than the House’s proposed 23 percent.

To prevent an estimated 16,000 families from dropping out of the program, the Senate also amended the premiums required for families participating in the state’s MC+ children’s health insurance plan. It replaced the House plan of level premium payments for families by creating a tiered premium plan for families earning more than 150 percent of the poverty level. Families earning between 151 to 300 percent of the federal poverty level would pay premiums between 1 and 5 percent based on their income. The premium for a family of four earning 151 percent of the federal poverty level would be \$24.

-MORE-

Farrah Fite, Senate Majority Caucus Communications Director
(573) 751-1562
ffite@senate.mo.gov

The Senate version of the budget also funded community and mental health services, including the Bellefontaine Habilitation Center located in suburban St. Louis. The Missouri Rehabilitation Center in Mt. Vernon will also remain open.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, commended Gross for his leadership on the budget process.

“Sen. Gross has worked in a bi-partisan effort to balance citizens’ concerns with our limited money,” Gibbons said. “Chuck has helped shape a budget that protects our state’s children, whether their education or health care, by giving the best services taxpayers can afford.”

Senators and House members will now meet and work out any differences in the bills. Once negotiated and approved by the conference committees, the measures will go back to the House for a vote where they originated. Once adopted by the House, the bills will need Senate approval before moving to the governor.

The budget must pass by 6 p.m. next Friday as required by the constitution.

###