

Column For Week of January 26, 2009

# Senator Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



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## Reflecting on the State of Our State

The governor delivered his State of the State address this week during a joint session of the Legislature. Upon listening to the address, I was reminded how important it is that, even during tough economic times, we keep Missouri's most essential priorities at the forefront of our efforts. Most of all, we must expand our economy through job creation, remain committed to stopping any tax increases, and make health care more available, affordable, and portable.

Throughout Jefferson City, there is a definite focus on the importance of job creation, and I remain especially committed to finding solutions that will promote a positive economic environment throughout our state. This week, I was honored to be appointed to the Senate Select Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus Plan. The new committee will focus on efforts that will allow the state to gain preference if or when federal stimulus dollars are being distributed.

During this critical time, we must ensure that we are making the right investments in Missouri's long-term economic prosperity. To that end, I filed Senate Concurrent Resolution 14, which would create the Blue Ribbon Panel on Job Retention and Economic Growth. The panel would advise and make recommendations to the Governor, General Assembly, and state agencies on matters concerning the social and economic effects of major corporate losses and other businesses within the state. The panel would develop a comprehensive statewide plan for job retention and economic growth.

Regardless of the tough economic times we are all facing, I will join with my Senate colleagues to protect Missouri taxpayers. We also should make responsible, common

sense decisions about spending. One such decision was made this week by the General Assembly when we passed a resolution stopping a legislator pay increase from going into effect. The situation originated from a decision by the Missouri Citizens' Commission on Compensation for Elected Officials, which is charged with studying elected officials' salaries. The panel makes a recommendation every two years about raises for elected officials. The General Assembly had to veto their recommendation to increase legislator pay before it took effect on Feb. 1<sup>st</sup>.

Another priority we must address is health care reform. There are currently 700,000 uninsured in our state, including children, and we must rely on creative solutions to address the growing problem. Some of my goals include making health care more "portable"—allowing individuals to keep their insurance when changing jobs. We also need to focus on preventative care so that we are spending less on reactive ER visits and more on making sure more Missourians are living healthy lifestyles.

The governor's state of the state message addressed some of these priorities, but we need a dedicated effort to pass meaningful legislation to help Missouri families. We should not, as he suggested, rely on economic stimulus money that we may or may not receive. It is essential that we use this one-time money to create jobs, not create more government bureaucracy that we can't afford in the long-term. I will remain committed to these priorities and focused on real solutions for our state.

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On another front, please keep me aware of any community events going on. I recently enjoyed participating in a tribute last Sunday organized by local supporters for former Sen. Mike Gibbons, who served the 15<sup>th</sup> District for eight years. It was an honor to speak at the event, and I thank Mike for all his service to our community and our state.



*Past and current 15<sup>th</sup> District Senators together at the Gibbons Tribute. Pictured are (from left) Sen. Walt Mueller (served from 1990-2000), Sen. Mike Gibbons (served from 2000-2008), and Sen. Eric Schmitt.*

## **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the information below. If you would like to begin receiving this column regularly, click on the subscribe link on the bottom of the page.

Thank you,  
Senator Eric S. Schmitt

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