



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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The Future of Farming

JEFFERSON CITY – I have seen the future of farming. No, I don't have a crystal ball, I don't have a time machine, and I'm not very good at reading the dark bands on wooly worms. No, to see the future of farming, all you have to do is visit the Greenley Memorial Research Center located near Novelty in Knox County. The Center held its annual Field Day this week to show farmers the latest innovations in crop and livestock management. Center Director Randy Smoot and Research Agronomist Kelly Nelson talked about emerging insect problems, new methods to manage nitrogen application for crops and using reproductive management to improve carcass quality, among other important topics. Research farms like Greenley are an excellent use of public dollars because they help bring new methods and new technologies to farmers, ultimately saving our farmers time and money while improving production.

Meantime, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is encouraging farmers to enroll in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), the first time USDA has held an open enrollment for the program since 2006. The CRP reimburses farmers who set aside highly erodible land for conservation and plant grasses and wildflowers to reduce erosion, improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat. Funding for CRP was approved by Congress in a 2008 farm bill. If you are interested in enrolling in the Conservation Reserve Program, contact your local Farm Service Agency representative.

Finally, Congress this week approved a \$26 billion bill aimed at saving the jobs of hundreds of thousands of teachers, police officers and public health workers in states like Missouri, which are struggling with budget cuts in a down economy. The measure includes \$10 billion to keep an estimated 160,000 teachers on the job across the country, and \$16 billion to help states meet their Medicaid payments for six months.

Budget experts in Missouri have been projecting a \$600 million shortfall in Fiscal Year

2012 compared to the current fiscal year, which started July 1. However, the measure approved by Congress this week is expected to reduce our budget shortfall to about \$200 million. Since our state constitution requires a balanced budget each year, lawmakers will have to cut roughly \$200 million from next year's budget.

We've already cut state government to the bone, so I'm not sure where we will find the additional savings. For example, this year Missouri lawmakers cut funding for school transportation, which disproportionately hurts rural areas like the 18th Senatorial District. We were unable to provide the funding increase for our public schools this year called for under the new school funding formula, forcing our local school boards to cut teachers and programs or go to the voters to ask for more money.

If you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an e-mail at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 W. Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.