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Capitol Report – January 8, 2010

State lawmakers convened at noon this week (1/6) in Jefferson City to begin the second session of the 95th General Assembly. The state budget will likely be the top issue during the 2010 legislative session.

I serve on the Senate Appropriations Committee charged with examining all facets of the state budget. I can assure you the committee will present a balanced budget that spends only what our state takes in, and no more. We will make the tough and necessary decisions to protect taxpayers during this tough economy. Just as importantly, we will manage your tax dollars without raising taxes. And we will work diligently to minimize the loss of vital programs and services. We will also make sure every dollar from the federal bailout coming to Missouri is spent properly and only in ways our state can support in the future.

This week I participated in a Senate panel reviewing the Department of Natural Resources' reporting delay of high bacteria levels at Lake of the Ozarks last summer. The Senate committee is assessing what steps led to the withholding of vital information, put Missourians' health and safety at risk, and violated the public trust. In a new development, state lawmakers learned the Department has again delayed releasing potentially harmful water quality testing results. New tests reported by the Department this week (1/7) that detected higher levels of hexavalent chromium in Hannibal's drinking water raise serious concerns about the Department's ability to maintain the public trust.

The Senate panel will continue to review these critical matters in the weeks to come. We intend to hold the Department accountable for all actions that could potentially impact the well-being of Missouri citizens.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on these or any other issues of concern to you. I appreciate and welcome your comments.

Committees:

Appropriations • Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment
Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families • Jobs, Economic Development and Local Government, Vice-Chair
Healthy Missourians 2020 • Job Creation 2020, Chair • Joint Committee on MO Health Net
Joint Committee on Legislative Research, Chair