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Capitol Report

May 24, 2018

I was pleased to learn that Green Ridge Elementary was named one of only 19 schools in Missouri to receive a CenturyLink STEM grant. The grants are awarded to Pre-K through 12th grade schools who have demonstrated innovative uses for technology in their schools. This is quite an accomplishment considering there were more than 1900 applicants last year. Congratulations to Dr. Burkhart, Rachel Hammers and all of the teachers, staff and students at Green Ridge Elementary School.

Last Friday the second regular session of the 99th General Assembly adjourned in accordance with the Constitution. Shortly after, a resolution was approved to call a special session to allow the bi-partisan Special Investigative Committee on Oversight to conclude its work and bring forth a recommendation to the full House.

In spite of the distractions, which were plentiful, we had a very productive legislative session. The regular session came to a close with the General Assembly giving final passage to more than 145 bills which I will touch on in the coming weeks in my end of session report.

The bills approved this year make substantive improvements for the people of Missouri by lowering taxes for working families, cutting bureaucratic red tape, providing expanded educational opportunities to young people, supporting the state's veterans, and protecting victims of human trafficking and domestic abuse.

Fiscally Responsible State Spending Plan with a Record Investment in Education

In addition to the policy initiatives adopted by the General Assembly, one of the biggest accomplishments of the 2018 session is a fiscally responsible state spending plan that makes a record level of investment in K-12 education. The spending plan approved by lawmakers fully funds the Foundation Formula for two consecutive years for the first time in state history. The spending plan also reverses cuts to higher education proposed by the governor. The restored funding is part of an agreement with the state's colleges and universities that will keep tuition increases in check so that higher education remains affordable for Missouri families.

The fiscally responsible \$28.3 billion spending plan approved by the legislature also holds welfare spending in check, and includes a budget reserve of \$100 million to allow for emergency spending needs. Additionally, the budget approved by the House and Senate increases the level of transparency and accountability for the use of taxpayer dollars. The budget plan breaks down spending for the state's legal expense fund, and improves transparency for spending within the state's conservation department, as well for dollars allocated to home-delivered meals.

2018 Legislative Highlights

- Working Family Tax Relief (HB 2540) - Missouri families will keep more of their paychecks under a tax cut approved by the General Assembly this session. The bill will provide Missourians with the largest single year income tax cut in the state's history. The bill reduces the existing individual income tax rate from 5.9 percent to 5.5 percent. Additional triggers based upon the state achieving certain revenue growth targets will eventually lower the individual tax income rate to 5.1 percent, putting Missouri among the top states for lowest state income taxes while still increasing general revenue.
- Corporate Tax Reform (SB 884) - In an effort to make Missouri even more attractive to job creators, the legislature has approved a bill that will make Missouri's corporate income tax the second lowest in the nation. The legislation will lower the corporate income tax rate from 6.25 percent to 4 percent in 2020. The bill is designed to be revenue neutral by closing loopholes in the current corporate tax structure. The measure is meant to update the state's outdated and complex corporate income tax code, and to create the best environment to drive economic development in Missouri.
- Uniform Small Wireless Deployment Act (HB 1991) - The House and Senate worked together this session to approve legislation meant to bring Missouri's wireless technology into the 21st century. The bill will allow "small cell" facilities to be deployed statewide so that the next generation of wireless technology can deliver faster and more efficient service. The legislation is designed to balance the needs of municipalities to manage the right-of-way in their communities with the need for wireless carriers to deploy this new technology. The bill is expected to create more than 20,000 jobs and attract \$2 billion in capital investment leading to nearly \$4 billion in economic growth over the next few years.

- Rural Broadband Development (HB 1872) – The General Assembly approved a bill this year to help expand broadband internet service throughout the state. The bill establishes a program to award grants to applicants who seek to expand access to broadband internet service in unserved and underserved areas of the state. The program will be administered by the department of economic development. The legislation is meant to address the 61 percent of rural Missourians, representing more than one million individuals, who do not have access to reliable broadband services.

I appreciate you allowing me the opportunity to serve you in Jefferson City.

Until our next update, I remain in your service.



Dan Houx

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