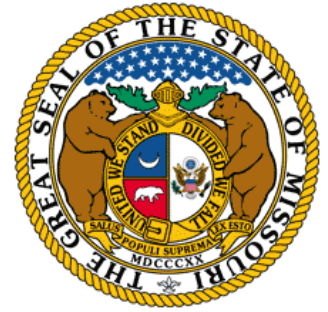




REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE DENISON DISTRICT 135

Committees

Vice Chair-Infrastructure and Transportation Funding
Vice Chair-Rural Development
Transportation
Transportation Oversight
Tourism
Local Government



Capitol Report

May 18, 2009

*"The only difference between death and taxes is that death doesn't get worse every time Congress meets."
–Will Rogers*

From the Desk of Charlie Denison

At 6 o'clock on Friday evening, the 1st Regular Session of the 95th General Assembly adjourned. A session that began with deep nationwide economic turmoil has concluded with many questions about our economic future still unanswered. Unlike no other sessions, this year we faced questions that divided legislators along unusual philosophical lines. The 4 billion dollars passed on to the state through the passage of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act offered challenges and often blurred the decision-making of many legislators. Once equipped with this "free" money, many legislators began to advocate for the expansion of government programs and the growth of state welfare while some of us continued to hold the line on taxes, wasteful spending, and government expansion. We decided to dedicate the session to helping Missouri's families with passage of a number of reforms as part of our "Family Recovery Plan."

While the Missouri House faced many challenges presented by the economic downturn and the subsequent response of the federal government, we continued to fight for responsible policies and effective government in the Missouri House of Representatives. We had many legislative accomplishments this session, but among the most important, was our responsible decision in quickly authoring and passing [House Concurrent Resolution 5](#). Just weeks before session began, the Missouri Citizens' Commission on Compensation for Elected Officials recommended that the legislature be given raises. Without passage of a resolution disapproving this raise, it would have become law. After much debate, we sent HCR 5 to the Governor, eliminating the proposed raise for elected officials. The passage of this resolution marked the

beginning of a session that worked to cut waste, limit spending, and provide relief to Missouri's families.

Just one week after eliminating raises for Missouri's elected officials, the Missouri House got to work on reversing the economic trends by creating jobs for unemployed Missourians. On February 5th, [House Bill 191](#) passed the House by a vote of 141-19. This job creation bill is designed to help attract businesses to Missouri and create jobs through proven economic incentives. After its quick passage in the House, the bill was stalled in the Senate for months. Many thought it would eventually die but with just hours remaining in session, the Senate reached a compromise and passed House Bill 191. Upon the Governor's signature, this bill will expand the Quality Jobs Act, Missouri's most proven economic development tool, and create new incentives for attracting businesses and jobs to Missouri. This proposal represented a bipartisan approach to job creation, with support from the Governor and a wide majority of members from both the House and Senate.

On February 18th, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. The effect of the bill, which exceeded 1000 pages in length and 750 billion dollars in cost, was quickly felt by the state. Many states welcomed the infusion of money that helped bail out their massive programs and oversized bureaucracy. We, in the Missouri legislature, took a careful look at the bill and moved forward cautiously as we worked to determine how best to handle the unprecedented package. In the end, we determined that these federal dollars, most of which had been borrowed, must only be spent on one-time expenditures and not on the expansion of government programs. We knew that this fiscally sound policy would ensure that our state would not be left with budget commitments far beyond our means that could only be funded through large tax increases once the federal money dried up.

The Missouri House worked diligently over the next three months to ensure that we moved forward in a responsible manner. We strived to ensure that an appropriate amount of funding was dedicated to infrastructure projects that would put Missourians to work. We were also fiscally responsible, saving enough for future budget years that could present even greater challenges while providing the relief that so many Missourians sought during these current economic challenges. We continued to work to determine how best to handle the funds and in mid-April, we rolled out a plan to use 1 billion dollars of the package to cut the state income tax rate for working Missourians. The plan, which would provide Missourians with hundreds of dollars of relief over the next two years, could help struggling individuals cover the costs of a house payment, a credit card bill, or healthcare needs. On April 30th, the House passed the proposed cut by a vote of 86-66. Unfortunately, in the final days of session, the Senate failed to adopt the proposal, which would have provided much-needed relief to Missouri's families.

While these times were unprecedented and the debates at times contentious, I never lost sight of why you sent me here. Whether we were fighting to eliminate wasteful spending, cut taxes, reduce bureaucracy, create jobs, reform our tax system or increase access to healthcare, I had you, my constituents, in mind with each decision we made. While the legislature came up

short on some issues, we did make numerous strides, which will help improve the lives of all Missourians during this current economic turmoil.

My Legislation

[House Bill 359](#), the major transportation legislation that I sponsored passed the legislature on May 5th and is now awaiting the governor's signature. Throughout session we worked hard to pass this legislation that will allow MODOT to tackle large projects and put Missourians to work, while cutting the length and cost of these projects. The bill received broad bipartisan support throughout the process as the legislature recognized that design-build contracts will be an extremely important step in putting Missourians to work.

[House Bill 381](#), a bill that I co-sponsored with [Representative Ryan Silvey \(R-Clay\)](#), passed the legislature on May 13 and, with the signature of the governor, will become law. This bill represents a major reform to a long-standing tradition of political cronyism in the awarding our state fee offices. For years, political allies and campaign contributors of the governor were given control over our state licensing offices. This year, we passed this reform that will give these offices not to political cronies, but rather our local charities.

The legislature also passed the following bills that I co-sponsored:

[House Bill 395](#) – Contains many provisions designed to help senior citizens

[House Bill 400](#) – Relating to veterans benefits

[House Bill 506](#) – Designates the first week of March as “Math, Engineering, Technology, and Science (METS) Week”

[House Bill 883](#) – Reforms the way in which the State Treasurer makes investments

[House Bill 919](#) – Allows group insurance for sole-proprietors and self-employed

individuals

To view the final status of the bills I authored this year, please visit [Charlie's Legislation](#) where you can view a complete list of the bills I sponsored and co-sponsored.

In the District

With the conclusion of this legislative session, I will be spending many of the coming months in the District. We will soon begin preparations for the next legislative session; working on legislation that failed to reach the Governor, addressing constituent concerns, and listening to the ideas, thoughts and opinions of individuals from the district. If there is ever anything that I can do for you, I encourage you to contact me.

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