



CAPITOL REPORT
DALE WRIGHT
DISTRICT 116
MISSOURI HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES



COMMITTEES

May 10, 2022

- *CONSENT & HOUSE PROCEDURES
- *CORRECTIONS AND
PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS
- *HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH
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Photo by The Indian Express

Belated Happy Mother's Day to all Mothers!
All Mothers deserve our thanks for all they do!

General Assembly Approves State Operating Budget that Makes Record Investments in Education and Infrastructure (HBs 3001 – 3013 and 3017, 3018, 3019, 3020)

Lawmakers have given final approval to a state spending plan that allocates record levels of funding to the state's system of education, as well as to vital infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, ports, water systems, and broadband. The budget plan also provides funding for programs that assist the state's most vulnerable citizens, increases support for law enforcement and public safety, invests in the state's workforce, and provides funding for a one-time economic recovery tax credit.

The House and Senate were able to compromise on the various differences in the plans approved by each side and sent the state spending plan to Governor Parson before the 6 p.m. deadline on Friday, May 6. The finalized version of the state operating budget contains approximately \$44.7 billion in funding for the upcoming fiscal year which begins July 1. Additional appropriations were approved by both chambers with an additional \$3.8 billion in funding for various capital improvement projects, as well as maintenance and repair of statewide facilities.

The budget also includes a \$500 million tax credit for Missouri taxpayers while leaving more than \$1 billion for state emergencies in the state treasury. There is more money coming into the treasury each day. When we return to session next year we hope to have a surplus in the state treasury and be back in the same positive financial situation again. If that happens we will again advocate for taxpayers to get a tax refund. Our goal in the House is to make this a permanent and lasting tax cut.

Record Investment in K-12 Education

The budget includes full funding for the state's K-12 foundation formula. In total, House members approved nearly \$10.4 billion in funding for K-12 education, which represents an increase of more than \$2.9 billion in funding when compared to the previous budget. That increase is fueled primarily by an additional \$2.4 billion in federal funding. The final version of the budget includes a funding boost of \$214 million for school transportation, which provides an unprecedented level of funding for the school transportation formula.

The plan also takes significant steps to improve teacher pay in Missouri. It includes an additional \$21.7 million to provide voluntary grants to local school districts, which can use the funds to help raise minimum teacher pay to \$38,000 annually. Districts that opt in will see the majority of the increase funded by the state with the remainder funded by the district. The budget also allocates approximately \$37.4 million to revive the Career Ladder program, which allows school districts to supplement the pay of teachers who take on additional duties. Additionally, the House plan invests \$50 million in newly-created Close the Gap grants that will help Missouri families address the learning loss that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

Increased Funding for Higher Education

Lawmakers also boosted funding for the state's institutions of higher learning. Core funding for Missouri's institutions of higher learning is increased by nearly \$43 million for the state's four-year institutions. **The state's community colleges will receive more than \$8 million for which means Mineral Area College will receive around \$700,000. We were also successful in getting \$5 million for the construction of Mineral Area College's new technical center and another \$3 million for the Cape Girardeau technical center, which MAC will manage.**

The budget also works to make college more affordable for Missouri students by increasing funding for the A+ Scholarship Program by \$6 million and the Access Missouri Scholarship Program by \$9 million, which fully funds the programs. The budget plan also includes an additional \$3.5 million for the Bright Flight Scholarship program, which fully funds the program to provide full scholarships to the top 5 percent of test takers.

New Funding for Roads, Bridges, and Vital Infrastructure Projects

The finalized budget plan also makes a strong investment in the state's transportation infrastructure. The spending plan allocates nearly \$148 million in new funding from the State Road Fund, which is used for maintenance and construction for roads and bridges. The spending plan also includes \$100 million for rural roads around the state that have fallen into disrepair. Additionally, the plan allocates \$75 million in federal funds for the Transportation Cost-Share Program that partners with local municipalities to fund road repairs. The plan includes \$25 million to help expand river ports in the state, an additional \$25 million to expand the port in Jefferson County, and another \$5 million for the port in New Madrid County. The state's Amtrak service also receives \$2.4 million in funding that will allow it to resume twice-daily rail service across the state.

Additionally, the plan provides a significant funding boost for water infrastructure projects throughout the state. In total, the budget provides more than \$837 million for water infrastructure grants and loans. The budget also supports efforts to expand broadband access in Missouri. It includes \$49.2 million in federal funds for the Rural Broadband Grant Program and \$250 million in federal funding for the broadband infrastructure program.

Helping the State's Most Vulnerable Citizens

The spending plan also provides increases to many of the programs that serve the state's most vulnerable citizens. The budget provides nearly \$674 million for rate increases for home and community-based service providers, which allow Missourians to stay in their homes. It also provides \$29 million for the state's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and an additional \$15.1 million for the AAAs to expand meal production capacity. The budget also increases funding for the Veterans Health and Care Fund by more than \$6 million to help further support the state's veterans' homes. Additionally, it provides more than \$16 million in funding for a mental health hotline program. Other funding increases include \$20.5 million for the Children's Trust Fund for grant programs that will assist children who are victims of sexual abuse and neglect, \$2.2 million for Alternatives to Abortion, and \$5.8 million for autism diagnostic centers.

Individual Items of Note in the Budget:

- Full funding for the K-12 School Foundation Formula
- \$214 million in new funding to fully fund the school transportation formula
- \$1.9 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds, as well as \$443 million in ESSER II funds, for K-12 education
- \$21 million for voluntary grants to help increase minimum teacher pay to \$38,000 annually
- \$37.4 million to bring back the Teacher Career Ladder program
- \$50 million for Close the Gap grants, which would provide funds to Missouri families to address learning loss
- \$5.8 million for a Parents as Teachers rate increase
- 5.4% core increases for funding for Missouri's institutions of higher learning
- \$6 million increase for the A+ Scholarship Program
- \$9 million increase to fully fund the Access Missouri Scholarship Program
- \$3.5 million increase to fully fund the Bright Flight Scholarship Program
- \$31.5 million in new funding for the MO Excels Workforce Initiative to develop and expand employer-driven education and training programs
- \$148 million allocated from the State Road Fund for construction and maintenance
- \$100 million for repair of rural, low-volume routes
- \$75 million in federal funding for the Transportation Cost-Share Program
- \$837 million for water infrastructure grants and loans
- \$55 million to expand ports in Missouri
- \$49.2 million in federal funds for the Rural Broadband Grant Program
- \$250 million for the broadband infrastructure program
- \$15.9 million for Missouri One Start to help businesses recruit, onboard, and train job applicants during expansions
- \$1 million for the Energize Missouri Small Agricultural Grant
- \$7 million for grants to drug task forces
- \$3 million for grants for drug interdiction technologies
- \$4.4 million in new funding for school safety applications
- \$42 million for next generation 911 functionality
- \$24.4 million to the Department of Corrections for health and mental health care

- \$29 million in new federal funding for the state’s Area Agencies on Aging
- \$15.1 million in funding for the Area Agencies on Aging to expand meal production capacity
- \$6.2 million for the Missouri Veterans Health and Care Fund to increase funding for the state’s veterans’ homes
- \$12.8 million for the Opioid Addiction Treatment and Recovery Fund for opioid antagonist distribution
- \$5.8 million for autism diagnostic centers
- Nearly \$3 billion in new funding for the state’s Medicaid program, which helps cover the cost of Medicaid expansion
- \$674 million for rate increases for home and community-based service providers to include developmental disability provider rate increases
- \$215.6 million in funding for new nursing home provider rates
- \$148 million for grants to federally qualified health centers
- \$93.5 million in federal stimulus funds for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- \$10.3 million in new federal funding for the Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program
- \$46 million for the Family First Prevention Services Act, which helps families safely keep their children at home
- \$2.2 million in increased funding for the Alternatives to Abortion program
- \$20.5 million for the Children’s Trust Fund for new programs to help children who are victims of sexual abuse and neglect
- \$500 million to provide tax relief to Missouri taxpayers
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Tax Relief to Missouri Taxpayers (HB 3020 and HB 2090)

As the state has seen healthy revenue growth and an influx of federal dollars, House members are giving significant portion of the funds in the state’s coffers back to Missouri taxpayers. This week the House’s plan to provide substantive tax relief took a significant step forward as the General Assembly approved \$500 million in funding for a one-time economic recovery tax credit for Missouri residents who paid personal income tax in the state for 2021.

The plan caps the total amount of non-refundable tax credits issued at \$500 million and allows anyone filing an individual Missouri personal income tax return to receive a credit equal to their tax liability up to \$250. Married couples filing jointly would receive up to a \$500 credit. The Senate added language that limits the credits to taxpayers earning \$150,000 or less for an individual, or \$300,000 or less for a married couple. Because we have excess funds, the government does not need more money. It is not the state’s money. It is the people’s money and we are giving it back!

Visitors to the Capitol



**Students of St. Paul Lutheran Visiting Capitol on April 25th!
What a great group of Students!**



**On April 21st, I enjoyed visiting with St. Francois County Collector Pamela Williams
Shirley Byington, Angie Userly and Donna Cash.
Welcome to the Capitol!**

My best to all of you!