

CAPITOL OFFICE

State Capitol – Room 403B
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City MO 65101-6806
Tele: 573-751-1344
Fax: 573-526-7739
E-Mail: tom.loehner@house.mo.gov

HOME ADDRESS

632 Loehner Ln.
Koeltztown MO 65048
Tele: 573-744-5516

Committees

Agriculture Policy
Appropriations-Transportation and Economic
Development
Conservation & Natural Resources

TOM LOEHNER
State Representative
District 112

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 29, 2007

For more information please contact Representative Tom Loehner at 573-751-1344

Hello from the Capitol!

The grass is really green and growing and the cows don't want to eat their hay. You know it's spring at the Loehner household when dad has to dig the lawn mower out of the garage so the kids can cut the grass.

We are back in Jefferson City this week working on legislation. We started off discussing House Bill 131. This legislation would change the laws regarding various sales and use, property, and motor fuel taxes. It authorizes an exemption from sales tax on all purchases of tangible personal property, utilities, services, and other transactions made for fulfilling United States government contracts. It also authorizes an exemption from the motor fuel tax for motor fuel sold for use by an interstate transportation authority, a city transit authority, or a city utilities board to operate a public mass transportation facility. The Department of Revenue is required to simplify the motor fuel exemption process by reducing the administrative burden, reducing the time to receive a refund, and splitting the refund between the fuel wholesaler/retailer and the tax exempt entity.

Bills also discussed this week were HB 851, HB 894, and HB 245.

House Bill 851 would require the Superintendent of the State Highway Patrol to designate some or all members of the patrol to be trained in accordance with a memorandum of understanding between Missouri and the United States Department of Homeland Security concerning the enforcement of federal immigration laws on federal highways and interstates in Missouri, subject to appropriation.

Law enforcement officers would be required to inquire into the citizenship and immigration status of persons placed under arrest and to verify the legal status of non-citizens with the federal government.

House Bill 894 would require independent candidates to file petitions for nomination for placement on official ballots and the declaration of candidacy forms for primary elections in the same manner as all other candidates.

House Bill 245 would require the commercial driver's license written test to only be given in English. Applicants for a commercial driver's license must be able to read and speak the English language sufficiently to understand highway traffic signs and signals, respond to official inquiries, and make entries on reports and records. Applicants will be prohibited from using an interpreter or translator while taking the test.

This week we also took on the task of debating and approving the 2008 Missouri State Budget. Fiscal restraint is a key component for a continued economically successful government. Our budget is over \$21 billion this year, the largest ever in the history of the state. We are in this position because the Missouri legislature was willing to make needed changes. The changes we made also required tough decisions but have led to a turn around in our state's economy. Since January 2005, Missouri has created 80,000 new jobs. These new workers have spurred the economy of our state from billion dollar shortfalls to million dollar surpluses.

Our recent success has put us in a unique position. We have more money than we need to cover our costs. In past years overspending was a problem Missouri legislatures ran into. However, we are committed to not repeating the mistakes of past General Assemblies and unnecessarily expanding the size of government or creating new programs that will grow wildly out of control someday.

Because we want to be fiscally responsible we have two main goals for our surplus revenues. One is to cut the taxes for the hard working people of Missouri. We have seen time and time again when the government reduces the tax burden on the average citizen the revenues generally increase. The reason is simple; more money in the pockets of those who earn it means more money will flow into our state's economy. Making tough choices while not raising taxes has been our goal since day one. This year we are taking the next step and moving to actually reduce the tax burden for our hard working citizens.

Our other goal when we started this year's budget process was to make sure that Missouri was prepared for an unforeseen recession or economic downturn. Rather than saddling future General Assemblies with the task of finding money where money does not exist or cut programs, we have remained committed to saving for the future. At his annual State of the State Address, Governor Blunt called for \$200 million to be placed into the State's Rainy Day Fund. The Rainy Day Fund is comparable to an emergency savings account that can be tapped into when an emergency or economic downturn occurs. These funds are added to each year and are available to plug holes and help avoid making drastic cuts to much needed public services. The Missouri House of Representatives understands the need to plan for the future and we are committed to meeting the governor's call for placing \$200 million into this fund.

Crafting an annual budget is never what one would call a fun experience. No family likes sitting down and planning out how every dollar will be spent. It has to be done and it has to be done carefully. You do not want to spend every dollar you make and at the same time you do not want to cut your lifestyle in order to save every penny as well. It is a long,

tedious and arduous task but each year we in the Missouri House of Representatives spend a great deal of time making sure the state will have the resources needed for the services our people need. I believe we have crafted a fair budget that will provide for the people of Missouri, continue our economic prosperity, and move us into the future. We hope to continue adding new jobs and making Missouri the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

We will have more details on the budget in next week's capitol report.

As always, it is an honor and pleasure to serve as your state representative.