

MISSOURI TRAVEL COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

From: Dale Amick 5/18/09

Budgetary decisions highlighted the 2009 Missouri legislative session that ended May 15.

The legislature approved a 23-billion-dollar new state budget that includes 23.7 million dollars for the Division of Tourism, the same funding level as the agency has this fiscal year. The Division was one of the few state agencies not to have its budget cut for the new fiscal year beginning July 1.

Gov. Jay Nixon had recommended the Division budget not be cut for the next fiscal year and the legislature agreed.

The legislature also passed nearly one billion dollars in spending of federal stabilization and stimulus money sent from Congress. Part of the funds were used to prop up the new state budget. The remainder is to be used for major state capital improvement projects all across the state. The legislature kept in reserve about one billion dollars in federal stimulus money for potential budget shortfalls in the 2011 fiscal year.

The governor must approve all spending proposals passed by the legislature before they can become law.

A major jobs bill was passed by the legislature in the closing hours of the session. The various provisions of the bill are expected to help businesses create from 2,000-5,000 new jobs. The bill also placed limits on several popular tax credits programs, including the historic preservation tax credits popular in the urban areas. The bill removes the state corporate franchise tax for small businesses.

Other bills that passed would:

- Remove the appropriation limit on the Missouri Arts Council.
- Change law regulating travel clubs.
- Allow for a four-day school week.
- Change lien procedures for outboard motors and vessels.
- Define boat docks as real property and require Lake of the Ozarks docks to display 911 addresses.
- Limit certain beer containers and coolers on the state's floating streams.

Among legislation that failed to pass was an omnibus local government bill that would have allowed Jefferson City to increase its tourism tax from 5 to 7 per cent.