

Missouri Travel Council Legislative Update

From: Dale Amick 3/4/10

Tourism and travel supporters descended on the State Capitol this past week for the annual Tourism Capital Days.

Tourism proponents spent time walking the hallways and visiting with many legislators on the importance of the industry to the well-being of the state's economy. On Thursday, tourism boosters hosted the annual Pancake Breakfast in the Capitol Rotunda for legislators and staff.

By all measures, the event was a great success. Thanks should go to organizers for planning an event that will be remembered by legislators, staff and tourism boosters.

The legislature will be taking next week off for spring break. It seems to be an opportune time as Gov. Jay Nixon and legislative leaders are at odds over writing a new state budget.

Sharply declining revenue coming into the state treasury has put the governor's recommended state budget short of being balanced. Since the governor recommended his budget blueprint in January, incoming revenue has fallen well below estimates.

Legislative leaders say the governor's recommended budget could be 300-500 million dollars short of being balanced. The exact number is in question. But the fact remains, further cutting of the governor's recommended budget seems in order.

Legislative leaders have asked the governor to re-submit another recommended budget that reflects the new revenue shortfall.

When the legislature returns to Jefferson City March 15, the House Budget Committee may begin efforts to write a new budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1. The latest budget sheet the committee will begin work from provides 19.4 million dollars for the Division of Tourism.

The governor had recommended 20.4 million dollars for the Division. Budget Committee Chairman Allen Ictet instructed the House Appropriations Committee on Economic Development to cut 5 per cent from all state program budgets, reflecting the current 19.4-million-dollar figure for the Division.

Appropriations Committee Chairman Charlie Schlottach stopped an effort by Rep. Doug Funderburk to cut the Division budget by five million dollars. Speaking up in committee for tourism and against the cutting amendment were Reps. Storch of St. Louis, Denny Hoskins of Warrensburg and Tom Loehner of Koeltztown. If these legislators are your representative, write them a thank you note for speaking up for our industry.