



Missourians to End Poverty

Bringing the Community Together to End Poverty.

Food

Health

Education

Energy & Housing

Family & Economic Security

Organizing a Legislative House Meeting

Manual

Developed by the
Missourians to End Poverty

CREATING THRIVING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

"Past the seeker as he prayed came the crippled and the beggar and the beaten. And seeing them... he cried, "Great God, how is it that a loving creator can see such things and yet do nothing about them?" God said, "I did do something. I made you."

~Author Unknown

It is about making a difference in the lives of so many in our state that we invite you to help build support for the public policies that create thriving sustainable communities. To do this, we must address the future revenue needs of our state and the pillars that support strong and healthy communities. Those pillars are Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security.

Those seeking public office in Missouri have the ability, and responsibility, to create public policies that address these highly significant issues and to create thriving sustainable communities. It is vitally important for us to engage candidates seeking office, prior to their election, about how important these issues are and inform them of our desire for candidates to seriously address these issues.

To bring this dialogue about, we invite you to be a part of our effort to meet with candidates during the late summer and fall of 2010. Our goal is to hold informal house meetings of interested voters, who care about these issues, with those who are seeking our vote. We call these *"Legislative House Meetings"*. We believe that this informal style meeting can lead to a greater freedom of conversation, richer dialogue and afford adequate time to begin to convey the importance of these issues. The meetings also serve as a means to seek commitments from the candidates to seriously grapple with these issues if they want our vote.

There are three main ways you can be a part of this process. First, you can be a guest at the home of someone who is planning one of these Legislative House Meetings. Second, you can help plan a Legislative House Meeting and get interested voters to attend. Third, you can host a Legislative House Meeting in your own home or co-host with another.

You have in your hands a packet of materials that will help you plan a successful Legislative House Meeting. These materials will help you to prepare, invite folks to attend, conduct, and record what happens at your meeting.

These efforts are being initiated by Missourians to End Poverty who are working to foster conditions that will help to create thriving sustainable communities. The creation of sustainable communities will help to alleviate and end poverty. We invite you to participate in this effort during the election cycle.

Creating Thriving Sustainable Communities

LEGISLATIVE HOUSE MEETINGS

Why host a Legislative House Meeting? Purpose & Outcomes.

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

~Author Anne Frank

This is what we are about. One meeting at a time, one conversation shared, one invitation to talk with each other can make all the difference.

Legislative House Meetings have the goal of bringing together those seeking public office with voters in an informal, non-confrontational house setting. This setting will be used to hear not only from the candidate, but to share with them how important it is to address significant issues facing Missourians. Through the sharing of stories, we hope that candidates will see that there are voters who are very concerned. They will see that there are voters who want those elected to seriously address the interconnected issues of Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security. We refer to these five issues as the five pillars. The pillars represent areas that must be addressed if we are to create thriving sustainable communities that reduce the deadening impact of poverty.

Intimately related to addressing these issues is the need to address our state’s revenue crisis. Our state cannot cut, spend, nor borrow its way out of budget challenges. Elected officials and the public must find a balanced approach to the serious revenue crisis facing our state.

We want those seeking public office to see, hear, feel, and walk away knowing that voters want them to take these issues seriously if she/he is elected. We want them to commit to addressing these issues and to meet with us again within 90 days of their election.

These Legislative House Meetings are not fundraisers, nor an endorsement of the candidate. These are a sharing of information and concepts that we must take seriously as our state faces these issues.

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During a Legislative House Meeting, amongst our participants, we hope to:

- Foster a common vision stemming from shared stories.
- Cultivate networks of people who might work together in the future.
- Identify common concerns, related to the five pillars and revenue, for action on behalf of the broader community.
- Identify people in the group and legislative candidates who want to get involved and possibly provide leadership and guidance to adequately address the issues surrounding the pillars and revenue.

In a Legislative House Meeting, you want to:

- Build relationships, not collect data.
- Share stories, beliefs and feelings, not declare ideologies.
- Understand each other, not argue with each other.
- Come up with a common vision, not just complain about what is not working in the legislature.
- Lead to common action around common goals that will result in next steps, not be satisfied with just conversing.

For More Information about Legislative House Meetings you may contact:

- St. Louis area: Pat Dougherty, St. Louis, (314) 367-5500
pdougherty@ccstl.org
- Kansas City area: Mike Halterman, Kansas City, (816) 221-4377
mhalterman@ccharities.com
Or
Eva Schulte, Kansas City, (816) 444-5585,
eva@cco.org
- Outstate Missouri: Elaine West, Jefferson City, (573) 634-2969
ewest@communityaction.org

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question: To what am I committing?

First, informing people that we are interested in building a long-term relationship with legislators who can advance our vision to create thriving sustainable communities. This will, in turn, help to reduce and ultimately eliminate serious poverty. People's attendance will show community and organizational support for this vision.

Secondarily, we want to gain insight about the personal, professional, and moral motivations of each candidate. We want to ascertain their current priorities and how they connect with the five pillars and the revenue crisis facing our state.

Answer: You are committing to giving an hour and a half of your time for a house meeting. You can tell people that their house meeting is one of over 25 taking place across the state this summer and fall. At the end of the meeting the host or chair of the house meeting will confirm a follow-up meeting date assuming the candidate is elected. This meeting will take place within 90 days of their election.

Question: Will the candidates be asking for help and support from those present? Is this about giving money or endorsing candidates?

Answer: The main focus is educational to share priorities and build a relationship long-term. There will be no group obligation and the host will clarify this. Missourians to End Poverty does not endorse candidates. Our focus is on the issues and working across the aisle to bring solutions to the five areas needed to create thriving and sustainable communities: Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security as well as address future revenue needs in our state. There are no endorsements and no fundraising at these events. Candidates will be informed that this is an educational opportunity with an exchange of ideas.

Question: What is the real or ultimate goal?

Answer: Thriving and Sustainable Communities—through addressing Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security concerns and adequate future state revenues.

Creating Thriving Sustainable Communities

Legislative House Meeting Manual

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Hosting a Legislative House Meeting: A “How-To” for Hosts

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Step 1: Determine a date, time, and location (preferably a home).

The date and time should be whatever works well for the candidate, you and the people you want to invite. You may find that you will need to choose a time that the candidate is available or willing to meet. For some groups, Saturday morning is best, for others it's a weeknight, for others it may be during a weekday. A group of families with younger children may choose a time and place when their kids can do a separate activity nearby. Choose whatever is most appropriate for you.

The meeting agenda is based on an hour and a half. Some people will choose to schedule their meeting for 7:30 p.m. (for example). If most people don't show up until 7:45, ask for permission, from the beginning, to extend the meeting until 9:15 so as to have the full hour and a half. Others will choose to schedule separate time for eating and visiting (for instance, from 7:00 – 7:30) and then start the meeting promptly at 7:30. Do whichever you would prefer.

Step 2: As host, decide if you will act as facilitator. If you decide not to act as facilitator, designate someone to help move, guide and keep the group focused on the issues and engage the legislator.

Step 3: Make up your list of people you want to invite.

There are three basic categories of people you may want to invite:

- Members of a group or church with whom you already have a relationship;
- Individuals who could provide testimony or experience related to the five pillars; and
- Others who make have a strong interest in the five pillars issue areas and revenue issues but who may not have a direct story.

Some meetings will be a mix of all three categories while some will just be one. Having a mix of different types of people is good for the meeting, so do whatever you'd like on this front.

Related materials: *Phone Invitation Record Sheet*

Step 4: Begin inviting people.

You may want to begin the process with an email but in the end, calls will be necessary. Eight is a good number for a Legislative House Meeting so it's good to get 12-14 solid commitments (“I will come,” not “I'll try”). To get to 12-14 solid commitments, you should generate a list of about 20 people to call (not all will be able to make it, etc.). It's good to give people some background about what to expect.

Related materials: *Phone Invitation Script*

Step 5: Email background information to attendees.

Once you have a list of people committed to attend, email them information about house meetings. Provide an agenda as well as a copy of the pillars/revenue document so that they know what to expect.

Related materials: *Legislative House Meeting Agenda, the Policy Papers and Missouri State Revenue Paper.*

Step 6: Reminder phone calls.

We all live such hectic lives that, if you want to be assured that people will attend you will need to call them to remind them at least once before the meeting.

Timeline to Plan a Legislative House Meeting

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4-6 weeks prior to event:

- *Make contact with the candidate to invite them and determine what times or dates they would be available.*
- *Choose a date, time, and location (preferably a home).*
 - *Meeting agenda will last approximately an hour and a half.*
- *Make up your list of people who you want to invite (about 20 people).*
 - *Suggestions: Church members, Colleagues, friends and others who share a passion for the issues we will be addressing.*
 - *Related materials: Page 8, Phone Invitations Record Sheet.*

3 weeks prior to event:

- *Begin inviting people*
 - *You can send initial invitations via email, but phone calls will eventually be necessary.*
 - *Target: 14-15 solid commitments (“I will come,” not “I’ll try”).*
 - *Related materials: Page 9, Phone Invitation Script.*

2 weeks prior to event:

- *Re-confirm meeting with candidate/elected official.*

1 week before event:

- *Call to remind participants about event.*

Note to host: It is important that no one person perform all the tasks of facilitator, time keeper and recorder. In order for each person to be able to focus on one task and fully participate, please keep these roles separate and distinct. You should have three separate individuals, all doing their specific task.

Phone Invitations Record Sheet

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Host _____

Caller (if different from Host) _____

Meeting date/time _____

Name	Phone number	Response	No, but can make another date	Comments	Reminder call made
1.		Yes No Follow-up			
2.		Yes No Follow-up			
3.		Yes No Follow-up			
4.		Yes No Follow-up			
5.		Yes No Follow-up			
6.		Yes No Follow-up			
7.		Yes No Follow-up			
8.		Yes No Follow-up			
9.		Yes No Follow-up			
10.		Yes No Follow-up			
11.		Yes No Follow-up			
12.		Yes No Follow-up			

Phone Invitation Script (suggested)

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Hi! This is _____ I'm a _____ host of an upcoming legislative house meeting bringing together friends, neighbors, colleague (you fill in what is most appropriate) to meet with candidates for office in the Missouri House or Senate to discuss with them ways to build communities that are thriving, sustainable and that ultimately address the serious problems of our time: Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, Economic & Family Security and future revenue needs of our state.

We are organizing more than 25 Legislative House Meetings across Missouri that will provide an opportunity to come together and share stories about how food, education, housing & energy, health, and economic & family security affect our families' lives. We will ask questions of candidates about their priorities and secure a longer term relationship with the incumbent or candidate.

I am calling to invite you to a house meeting that I am hosting in my home (or at the home of _____) on _____. The meeting will include around 10 - 12 people and last an hour and a half. At the meeting we will ask you and others to talk about a personal story or issue that is **important to you** related to our issues of state revenue and the issues of five pillars of Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security. We hope to hear about the concerns and priorities of the candidate.

Will you be able to attend?

As an individual or with someone else in your family or organization?

Any questions?

(If no, can you think of anyone you know who would be interested in this?)

(If that day and time don't work, would you be willing to come to another meeting when it's more convenient?)

When is good for you?)

If yes, ask for email and offer to send additional info (pages 12 & 13) and go over the agenda.

Great! The meeting will be on _____ and will begin promptly at _____ and will end at _____.

Thanks for your time. I'll see you on _____

Day of the Legislative House Meeting

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Set up room for meeting.

- Room should be a quiet place with few distractions.
- If possible, arrange seats so no one has their back to anyone.

Have Name Tags and a sign-in sheet.

- Related materials: Page 13, Sign-In sheet.

Appoint a note taker.

- Related materials: Pages 14-15 Note takers' Reporting Form.
- After meeting, note taker should type notes and mail or email to MACA.
Missouri Association for Community Action
2014 William
Jefferson City, MO 65109
If you email, send to dhumphrey@communityaction.org.

Appoint a timekeeper.

- This person should be comfortable warning people that the time for a section is nearly up or asking someone to wrap up.

Appoint a facilitator (can be the host).

- This person does not have to be an expert on issues, but should be someone who can help the group focus on the purpose of the meeting, make sure all are engaged or have the opportunity and who can interact both with the guests and the candidate.

Prepping for the Meeting

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BEFORE THE MEETING BEGINS AND THE CANDIDATE ARRIVES

It's very easy for our leaders to get off topic during meetings with legislative discussions. By prepping people well for the meeting we accomplish two things:

- Assure the quality of the Legislative House Meetings.
- Model deliberate meetings for ourselves and stay on target.

Prepping Facilitator Key points

- Be very clear that these meetings are intended to initiate or maintain relationships between candidates/ legislators and us.
- Meetings are organized around revenue issues and the Five Pillars: Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security issues. More information on the five pillars is located in this manual. We need leaders to understand those issues as the scope of the meeting. For example, we don't want participants to bring additional issues or questions (i.e. school vouchers, reproductive health, gun control) to the meetings. This is not an open dialogue. Participants will gain status with candidates/ legislators through these meetings, paving the way for them to work with the legislators on issues outside of those that will be addressed at the meeting.
- Facilitators should understand the agenda, the roles and flow of the meetings.
- Facilitators should commit to arriving early for the group prep session and to staying for the debriefing and evaluation.
- Leaders should understand that we are deepening our public relationship with legislators and future legislators.

Legislative House Meeting Agenda

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A. Prepping session with participants before candidate arrives (15 minutes)

I. Welcome and set ground rules for meeting (10 minutes)

[Note: After the welcome, you may wish to establish ground rules with the group, as these can make people feel more secure in expressing opinions. A sample set of ground rules is on the following page.]

II. Overview of objective of House Meeting (5 minutes)

(Include focus on finding creative, balanced, revenue-generating solutions that reflect our values)

III. Introductions (15 minutes)

- Everyone introduce yourself and, in less than one minute, tell a personal story about why you are here.

IV. Discussion with candidate (30 minutes)

- Engage candidate on response to your stories and concerns about revenue.
- Ask the candidate how what you have shared match his/her priorities.
- Ask the candidate what budget solutions s/he would be willing to consider beyond just making more cuts.

V. Next steps and closing (5 minutes)

- Chair/Host summarizes discussion
- Chair/Host on behalf of group asks for commitment from candidate to meet again within 90 days if elected

VI. Evaluation (after candidate leaves) EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

- What reactions from legislative candidate and revenue particularly strike you?
- Can we learn anything from this meeting?
- What should we do differently next time?
- Who will host another legislative house meeting?
- Who will write thank you and follow up with legislator regarding future date to meet?

Notes from this part of the meeting should be made and added to the notes section of the Note Taker Reporting form.

House Meeting Sample Ground Rules

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These are examples you may or may not wish to incorporate. Ask if the group would like any other ground rules or if there are ground rules that concern them. If there are no stated concerns or objections, let the group know that these will be considered the adopted ground rules.

- Respect each other's comments and input.
- All comments and opinions are welcomed.
- No texting, phone calls or other distractions during the meeting.
- Each person should feel free to take care of personal needs (take a restroom break; stand up to stretch, etc).
- Dialogue is very important.
- Leave turf issues at the door.
- Honor different personality styles.
- Allow people to take ownership of their comments by respecting the right to make comments in a confidential manner. In other words, don't quote individuals or speak on behalf of individuals after the meeting is over.

Legislative House Meeting Sign-In Sheet

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Host: _____ Date: _____

Name (please print)	Phone	Email
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		
12.		
13.		
14.		
15.		
16.		
17.		

Note Taker's Reporting Form

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Host (s) _____ Recorder _____

Meeting date _____

Questions	Legislator/Candidate Responses	
Incumbent/Candidate Name		
Information about candidate (Age range, Professional & volunteer experience, Length of time in community)		
Candidate's priorities		
Candidate's allies		
Revenue Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlined sales tax (sales tax on internet sales) • Corporate and other tax loopholes (corporation multi-state tax avoidance, Yacht exemption) • Tobacco tax • Timely filing • "Updated Income tax" (last updated in 1931) 		

Food	
Education	
Housing & Energy	
Health	
Economic & Family Security	
Will you meet with us within 90 days after you are elected? Date:	
Specific Follow up requests/suggestions	

Tackling Complex Issues

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Every Problem Magnifies the Impact of the Others

Tackling the Complex Set of Issues That Create Healthy, Strong Families and Communities

“Every problem magnifies the impact of the others, and all are so tightly interlocked that one reversal can produce a chain reaction with results far distant from the original cause. A run-down apartment can exacerbate a child’s asthma, which leads to a call for an ambulance, which generates a medical bill that cannot be paid, which ruins a credit record, which hikes the interest rate on an auto loan, which forces the purchase of an unreliable used car, which jeopardizes a mother’s punctuality at work, which limits her promotions and earning capacity, which confines her to poor housing. If she or any other impoverished working parent added up all of her individual problems, the whole would be equal to more than the sum of its parts.”

David Shipler, author of The Working Poor illustrates how poverty issues are interconnected to the point that small setbacks or advances to an individual’s situation can have dramatic impact. Failing to address any of these areas makes it difficult, if not impossible, for families to succeed and work towards the alleviation of poverty.

Any person who becomes familiar with the issues of building thriving communities ultimately comes face to face with the five pillar issues described below. These issues are inter-related so improvement in one of area can have positive effects on the other areas. The reverse is true as well; failing to address these essential areas make it difficult if not impossible to build thriving sustainable communities.

MEP has identified five areas or “pillars” which must be addressed if we are to build thriving, sustainable communities. In order to seriously address these, it is essential to discuss the revenue needs of our state and to seek balanced approaches to the revenue needs of our state.

Food

The Reality: Many Missouri families struggle to meet their basic food needs.

The Vision: Hunger is eliminated. People have affordable, adequate, nutritious, local food.

Families who do not have adequate, nutritious food often develop health concerns, may find that their intellectual development is hindered, and struggle to focus on “every day” issues. And children who are hungry do not do well in school.

Education

The Reality: Many high school students do not graduate from Missouri high schools, putting them at a disadvantage for securing quality employment.

The Vision: There is quality education that supports lifelong learning for all members of the community.

Children who lack quality educational experiences earlier in life are at a disadvantage when they attend school. A drop out from high school often does not have good employment options and often earns less money than graduates. As a result, they and their families may lack the resources they need to meet the basic needs of their family.

Housing & Energy

The Reality: Low income families pay too high of a percentage of their income for housing and energy.

The Vision: People have affordable, energy-efficient, safe housing which supports family stability. Energy sustainability is supported by economically viable green technology and conservation efforts.

Families who have inadequate housing may spend most of their money on utility bills. Inadequate housing creates environments that are counterproductive to family values, maintaining good health, ability to focus on education and maintaining employment responsibilities.

Health

The Reality: The number of uninsured people in Missouri has risen.

The Vision: People have accessible, adequate, affordable, quality, local health care. Prevention is the norm and the community is healthier and more productive.

People without health care may neglect their health needs, become ill more often, have poor employment attendance records, are not able to focus on education, and other basic necessities.

Economic & Family Security

The Reality: Too many Missourians live in poverty. Many are children.

The Vision: Individuals are provided with a wage in a Missouri economy that achieves economic security for everyone. For those unable to work, economic security is achieved via a mix of financial, personal, and social supports. The common good is supported statewide and results in stable families and individuals and safe, diverse communities.

Good employment opportunities allow individuals and families to be self-reliant. This, in turn, creates the environment that allows individuals and families to be respected, have opportunities to reach their full potential and participate in thriving, diverse, sustainable communities.

Revenue Needs for Our Future

The Reality: The current revenue base in Missouri does not adequately address the needs of the issues outlined around the Five Pillars.

The Vision: Missourians would create a revenue system that would address the very human needs related to creating thriving sustainable communities: Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & family security.

Who are the Missourians to End Poverty? *Creating Thriving Sustainable Communities*

As Missourians, we envision a just society of shared responsibility by individuals, communities, businesses, and government in which all individuals are respected, have opportunities to reach their full potential and to participate in thriving, diverse, sustainable communities.

Prior to the summer of 2009 a group of individuals, non-profit, and for-profit organizations, businesses and faith based organizations began to meet to discuss how they might alleviate and work towards eliminating poverty in Missouri. The group, which is non-partisan and stretches across the state, grew in both numbers and enthusiasm resulting in the Missouri Poverty Summit in June 2009. At the summit over 400 people gathered to discuss the shared vision of the Missourians to End Poverty (MEP).

MEP has identified five areas or “pillars” of poverty that must be addressed if we are to seriously alleviate and work towards the eradication of poverty. These five pillars are: Food, Education, Housing & Energy, Health, and Economic & Family Security. A concept paper which addresses the state revenue needs has also been developed.

These papers are designed for action on public policies that can help alleviate poverty. We also recognize the need to develop efforts to eradicate poverty on the regional and local levels. Community action agencies throughout Missouri also share this vision and organized Community Empowerment Collaborations in local communities. These local collaborations are bringing together citizens, from all walks of life, to explore how they can alleviate poverty in their communities, using their collective resources. Their success inspires many to work toward the vision. To learn more about the Community Empowerment Collaborations contact: David Humphrey (573) 634-2969, dhumphrey@communityaction.org.

No effort will succeed long-term in Missouri without addressing the future revenue needs of the state. It is necessary that we begin to explore balanced approaches to end our revenue crisis. A revenue paper focusing on state revenue is a starting point to address Missouri’s revenue crisis and build for our future—a future of thriving and sustainable communities.

Due to the success of the 2009 Poverty Summit, the community empowerment collaborations and the commitment of the MEP, a poverty summit is being planned for the summer of 2011. The summit will provide an opportunity to continue the development of new ideas, programs, and new collaborations to work to eradicate poverty in Missouri.

Additional information concerning MEP can be found on the Missouri Association for Community Action website at www.communityaction.org, or contact Elaine West at (573) 634-2969, ewest@communityaction.org.

Food Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas from communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

Food Insecurity*

Food insecurity and hunger are facts of life for too many Missourians. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, an average of 12.3% of Missourians faced the uncertainties of acquiring sufficient food to lead healthy and active lives over the period of 2004-2006. This average represents a significant increase from that documented for 2001-2003 (10.4%) and 1996-1998 (3.0%). During 2004-2006, an average of 4.4% of our citizens experienced hunger and the physical, psychological, and social harms of simply not having enough food. Regretfully, recent trends in hunger are not positive ones for our state, as current averages for hunger represent more than a 20% increase over the averages for 2001-2003 (3.6%) and 1996-1968 (3%). Missouri hunger statistics for 2008 note that 12.9% of the population is food insecure, the overall poverty rate is 13 %, and the child poverty rate is 17.7%.(1) An estimated 728, 400 Missourians received assistance from emergency food programs in 2009, 77% of whom are food insecure. (2)

The best predictor of food insecurity and hunger in Missouri, an through the nation, is poverty. Also, research has demonstrated that poverty is positively correlated both with food insecurity and with chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity and hypertension. Many of Missouri's counties that have the highest food insecurity and hunger also have the highest levels of residents with these poor health conditions. (3)

Moving Toward Food Security*

The problem of food insecurity and hunger in Missouri and in the nation is solvable. It isn't an issue of food production because we produce more than enough to feed everyone already. It is instead an issue of the equitable distribution of food and an issue of societal and political will. The simple and disturbing truth is that the situation of food insecurity and hunger exists because we as Americans , as Missourians, tolerate it.

Every Missourian can do something to end hunger. Involvement begins with being informed. An excellent resource is the *Missouri Hunger Atlas*: www.missourifamilies.org/mohungeratlas, a project of the Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security, University of Missouri, Columbia. Missourians can also provide financial and volunteer assistance to local food pantries and social service agencies and become involved in social justice advocacy.

* Food security, as the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program within the United States Department of Agriculture defines it, refers to "access by all people at all times to enough food for an

active, healthy life". Food insecurity occurs when that quality of life is threatened by malnutrition and hunger.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Begin full utilization of Food Stamps/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) at farmers markets, and include use with local producers
- Increase funding and outreach for Food Stamps/SNAP
- Increase funding and outreach for WIC
- Increase the number of farmers markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) projects
- Support funding for development of community gardens, especially in low income neighborhoods
- Increase the number of local, sustainable, and green processing facilities for meat, poultry, and produce
- Restructure farm policy to support small and family farms
- Couple food assistance with health and nutrition assistance
- Place greater emphasis on the nutritional and health impacts of food choices among staff and clients of all public and private programs
- Applaud school districts who have instituted healthier and more nutritious school meal programs; grant special recognition to model districts
- Target resources and new strategies to counties characterized by high need and low performance; see pp. 29-31, *Missouri Hunger Atlas*
- Increase support of public and private food assistance programs and increase their educational outreach
- Strengthen linkages between private sector temporary food assistance programs (e.g., food pantries, soup kitchens) and local food systems (e.g., community gardens, farmers markets)
- Provide technical assistance to communities to engage in community food security assessments - and the implementation of action plans growing out of the assessments
- Engage in social justice and public policy advocacy on issues related to food security and hunger

Missouri Hunger Atlas, p.32

Hunger in America 2010, Missouri State Report, a study conducted for Feeding America (formerly America's second Harvest) in 2009 by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.

Missouri Hunger Atlas, p.32,34

Education Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas from communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

Quality Education

Ensuring quality education from early childhood, through grades K-12 and college is an essential component to eradicating poverty in the state of Missouri. Numerous studies find a positive correlation between higher levels of education and increased job earnings later in life. One study has found that for every one year of schooling earnings for welfare recipients increased by 7%. Without adequate education, young people are regulated to low-paying unskilled service jobs that fail to provide economic security and trap them in a lifetime of poverty.

Yet it is precisely in areas of concentrated poverty, where quality education is most lacking. In 2009 Missouri had a 4.3% high school dropout rate. In areas of concentrated poverty, however, the dropout rate is much higher. For example, the St. Louis City district in 2009 had a dropout rate of 27.5 percent while Kennett, Missouri had a dropout rate of 12%.

Many conventional solutions to improving educational performance have failed. A new strategy must involve rejecting a “silo” mentality that views schools in isolation from the rest of the community. In order to ensure quality education for children in areas of concentrated poverty, all aspects of family and community life must be engaged in the process of educating children.

Family Stability

A stable and caring family enables children to learn and to be formed in basic values, such as respect for one self and for others. Schools can assist in this process through programs such as Parents as Teachers. Neighborhoods must be safe and offer children and young people constructive activities. Law enforcement, community organizations such as Big Brother and Big Sister and churches can all work with local schools to help create an environment where children and young people can reach their full potential.

Schools themselves must be staffed by skilled teachers who are compensated fairly and given adequate resources to help students to learn at high levels. A recent Trust reveals that nationwide about 40 percent of all core subject area classes, in high poverty, high minority middle schools, are staffed by out-of-field teachers.

Building principals must be recruited who know how to lead and support effective teaching and to create school environments where children can learn. These principals must be allowed sufficient flexibility to assess the challenges in their schools and to address them with creative solutions.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Enhance the Parents as Teachers program and provide incentives for parents to participate. Ensure schools are welcoming to parents and encourage their involvement. Expand funding for quality early childhood centers and make those centers accessible to families.
- We support efforts to increase opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive early education programs for low-income children by increasing or sustaining appropriations to Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- Strengthen school ties to community organizations and institutions that work with children and youth, such as YMCA, Big Brother, Big Sister, Boys & Girls Clubs, Scouts, law enforcement, drug treatment and juvenile facilities, libraries and places of worship.
- Educate the whole community, i.e. business, faith-based, human services, etc. about the dynamics that poverty and the economy have to play in the development of our future community by improving our state's graduation rate and producing educated and productive citizens.
- Create school environments where children feel safe and can learn. Initiate positive behavior programs with appropriate training for staff. Give building principals sufficient flexibility to address discipline problems. Encourage the use of dress codes and ensure that alternative schools are available for disruptive students.
- Give more authority to building principals to spearhead educational initiatives, mentor teachers, and provide for more parental involvement in their schools.
- Fairly compensate teachers and ensure that they have adequate resources to teach their students. Recruit talented teachers to teach in areas of pervasive poverty. Provide these teachers with special training to meet the unique challenges they face in these areas.
- In order to promote testing that facilitates learning rather than penalizing schools and teachers, scale back state testing of students and place more of the testing decisions with building principals and their teachers.
- Promote a comprehensive and flexible curriculum that meets the educational needs of students at different levels of academic ability. Provide arts education, career education and other programs that motivate students and keep them in school.
- Encourage the use of Work Opportunity Tax Credits to assist employers in hiring employees from targeted groups with barriers to employment.

Housing & Energy Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statement centers around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education.** Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas with communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

Affordable, healthy and energy efficient housing is the essential foundation needed for Missouri families to survive and thrive. To prevent the crisis of poverty for families with limited resources, we must address the housing situation in Missouri. In order to protect our future, we need to ensure that homes for Missouri's most vulnerable citizens, our children, are affordable, healthy, and safe.

One out of every three people living in severely substandard housing is a child. In 2009, the National Low Income Housing Coalition released a report called "Healthy Homes", which found that substandard housing contributes significantly to the health issues faced by many low income children. While the effects on children from lead poisoning, chronic carbon monoxide poisoning (low-level), and asthma have been proven to impact a child's ability to learn and perform in school...another important element in this debate is the economic impact.

The estimated cost nationwide for lead poisoning related issues alone is over \$44 billion. Take into account the lost work productivity for parents of sick children, the lost learning which impacts the overall earning potential of the children involved, and the increased expenditure for special education and medical expenses and the impact on the economy becomes enormous. For help with lead and environmental issues see: <http://epa.gov/compliance/encvironmentaljustice/grants/ei-smgrants.html>.

Energy

Low income households pay an average of 46% of their gross pay toward two expenses, housing and energy. A household is considered "cost burdened" if they pay more than 30% of their income toward housing and prior to the current economic crisis, 40% of renting households and 20% of homeowner households fell into this category. In addition to a lack of affordable, safe housing, the rising cost of energy has created even more of burden for low income families.

The average expenditure in low-income households is nearly \$1,673 annually. Low income families must often cut back on other necessities, such as food or health care to pay their energy bills. (US Department of Energy) Most families bear an energy burden of 3-6% of their income, yet low-income households often must pay 16% or more of their household income towards energy expenses.

A record number of households are applying for help to pay home heating bills through the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, with 17 states, including Missouri, reporting that requests for applications are up by 20% from 2009.

Affordable Housing

In Missouri, the Fair Market Rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$646. To afford this two-bedroom apartment, a person must earn \$12.43 per hour. However, the estimated average wage for a renter in this state is \$11.85 an hour. Therefore, a renter must work 42 hours a week, for 52 weeks per year. (National Low Income Housing Coalition)

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Support low income Housing Tax Credits, which provide a resource for many organizations to use in the development of new housing as well as the renovation of homes for low income families. In addition, take steps to ensure that a significant number of these credits go to non-profit development projects. Making such modifications will promote long term sustainable low-income housing since not for profit organization have no vested interest in converting units to the market rate. (Many developments are converted to market rate after 15 year, thereby decreasing the number of units available to low and moderate income households.)
- Develop a housing code enforcement program to ensure that rental units in Missouri are safe, healthy, and in compliance with local and state building codes.
- Develop energy efficiency housing codes (legislation), which would address long term energy efficiency in new housing.
- Increase funding for Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). This program alleviates the heavy energy burden on low-income households and helps them become self-sufficient.

Weatherization:

- Creates an average energy savings of \$358 per year
 - Reduces a household's annual gas heating consumption by 32%
 - Improves health and safety by eliminating energy-related hazards
 - Weatherization returns \$1.53 in energy-related benefits for every dollar invested in the program
 - For every \$1 invested by Department of Energy, the program leverages \$1.54 in other federal, state, utility and private resources
- Provide housing assistance for families receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) as they transition from welfare to work to keep the housing costs affordable and enabling them to live closer to better employment opportunities.
 - Increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Program (LIHEAP). This program provides much needed funds that can be used by low income families to meet many types of energy assistance needs, reducing the energy burden these families face. LIHEAP also aids in keeping low income children and elderly safe in extreme summer and winter weather.
 - Prevent the "hidden homeless" children by providing funds for housing vouchers. Nationally, 53% of the household that receive vouchers are families with children. When housing costs

cannot be covered in the budget families are moving and doubling up with friends or other family members.

- Invest in affordable housing initiatives to prevent the cost associated with foster care. The average annual cost to place the children of one family in foster care is \$47,600 annually. The average cost of permanent housing with supportive services for a family for one year is a fraction of that amount.
- Develop a source of funds for new and rehabilitated housing to provide for healthier living conditions for children and their parents. Studies show that children who have secure, affordable housing are far more likely to stay in school and succeed socially. Their parents are far more likely to keep their jobs and maintain family income.

Health Care Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food, and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas with communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

The State of Missouri could go a long way in improving the lives of its distressed families by moving in the direction of providing quality, affordable, health care to all Missouri families.

One of the most significant impediments for Missouri families to accessing a quality, affordable health care system is a lack of health insurance coverage. In our state most Missourians access health care with employer provided insurance. But in our system of employer provided insurance, all too often those at the lowest levels of income are not provided coverage by their employer. This creates a system that forces those with the lowest incomes to pay out of pocket for their health care, while those at higher incomes receive employer subsidies.

The Census Bureau estimated that in 2007-2008 the number of uninsured Missourians was 734,000 but a study done by FamiliesUSA estimated that one in three Missourians under the age of 65 went without insurance during that time. Nearly 1.5 million Missourians had gaps in coverage and most of them (71.9%) for 6 months or longer, threatening their health and their economic well-being. Many of those are working poor. This lack of coverage causes Missouri families to access the health care system in inconsistent and inefficient ways that imperils their well being and raises the health care cost for all Missourians.

Public Policy Action Strategies to Provide Access to Healthcare by:

- Maximizing Federal participation in state based coverage programs such as MoHealthNet (Medicaid and CHIP) that provide health coverage to distressed families.
- Extend or make permanent the increase in the Federal percentage of the Medicaid Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP), commonly referred to as “enhanced FMAP”.
- Providing access to health care services in rural and underserved areas through a strong network of safety net providers.
- Fund the dental provision in MoHealthNet that provides for reimbursement for dental services.
- Increase access to quality health, dental and vision care for distressed families by supporting increases in reimbursement rates to health providers.
- Allow individuals, families and small business to buy into a statewide consolidated health plan that would spread risk and lower cost.

- Reduce the “spend down” provision that forces Missourians with disabilities to spend themselves into poverty before they can receive benefits.
- Provide support services to Missourians with disabilities and elderly poor that allows them to stay in their community and out of costly institutions.

Children’s Health

- It is estimated that 132,200 children in Missouri do not have health care coverage. Of that total, approximately 87,000 children are eligible to participate in the state children’s health insurance program (SCHIP).
- Support Minority and Women’s Health Program within MoHealthNet.
- Fund nurse home visitation for at risk babies and families.

Children’s Health Insurance

- Increase enrollment and retention of children in MO HealthNet for Kids (Missouri) by:
 - Supporting innovative ways to reach out to eligible, yet unenrolled children
 - Removing administrative barriers
 - Implement express lane eligibility
 - Establish a 6 or 12 month continuous enrollment
 - Use school based outreach to identify eligible children using Free/Reduced lunch criteria
 - Implement administrative renewals
 - Include a new section in state tax return forms that would allow people to indicate whether their dependent children have health insurance
 - Establishing a state children’s health insurance buy-in program

Childhood Obesity

- Promote active living lifestyles and healthy eating by supporting state and local policies that increase school physical education requirements and improve access to fresh foods and school-based nutrition services.

Mental Health

- Achieve mental health parity.

- Fund treatments that keep people independent and out of institutions and hospitals, ultimately saving the state money in the long term.
- Maintain consistent formularies that are crucial to the stability of the patient.

Support Our Safety Net System of Health Care Providers

- Maintain local and state support for the network of non-profit “safety net providers” such as Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC), Rural Health Centers, and Tier One Safety Net Hospitals. These facilities see high volumes of MoHealthNet and uninsured patients and benefit from a blended revenue stream that provides access to primary and emergent care for Missouri’s distressed families.
- Support Free Clinics that provide basic care to Missourians with no ability to pay and no ability to access coverage.

Family & Economic Security Policy Statement

To reinforce the policy platform of Missourians to End Poverty, our policy statements center around the intertwined five pillars of poverty: **health care, housing & energy, economic & family security, food and education**. Our goal is to raise community awareness and understanding of the impact of poverty as well as create concrete ideas from communities about local and state solutions to ending poverty.

The economic picture for Missouri is disturbing. The reality is that in 2009, Missouri lost a total of 62,600 jobs, resulting in an increased unemployment rate of 9.6%. Of Missouri's entire population, the latest census figures tell us that 781,842 people live in poverty... and 263,484 of them are children.

Quality Jobs

Obviously, one critical issue is getting people back to work in job that will sustain local economies, provide a living wage for families to be supported without the need for social programs, and help make communities attractive places to live and raise families. The current unemployment rate in Missouri as of December 2009 is 9.6%, the highest it has been since 1983 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Another important aspect to steady employment in Missouri is the retention of jobs. For example, elimination of state employment positions by benefit the state's budget in the short term, but adds to the growing burden of the jobless, uninsured population.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Promote investment by public and private partnerships that address the creation of jobs and the alleviation of poverty.
- Promote job creation in the new "green" economy industries such as clean and renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, conservation and reclamation.
- Encourage all employers to offer health care benefits.

Workforce Development

398,092 Missourians received services through Missouri Career Centers—a 70% increase from the previous program year. (Department of Economic Development, Division of Workforce Development Annual Report 2009) In order to be competitive in emerging job markets such as the "green economy", Missourians must be trained and ready.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Leverage state and federal investments to prepare Missourians to take advantage of emerging jobs.
- Ensure that job training and educational opportunities are available statewide and across all income levels.

Quality Childcare

Child care is a critical need for working individuals and families with children. Low income people often struggle with childcare issues due to work hours that do not coincide with child care availability,

transportation problems (routes or schedules), the prohibitive cost of quality care, and more. In 2008 the eligibility level for child care assistance in Missouri was 127% of the federal poverty guideline with some transitional benefits up to 139%. For a single parent trying to work and raise a child, child care benefits would be lost with an annual income of \$20,252 which equals a weekly gross pay of \$669.

Public Policy Action Strategies

Ensure access to quality childcare in the home and in the community by:

- Increasing investment in child care subsidies and quality improvement so that more high-quality child care options are available and affordable for parents.
- Ensure that public pre-kindergarten programs are designed to meet the child care needs of working families.
- Improve federal and state tax codes to help families at all income levels pay for child care.

Tax Relief for Working Families

One problem low income families experience with taxation is the high burden of taxes low income families pay compared to middle and higher income families. Another is solicitation for predatory tax preparation and high interest rate tax refund anticipation loans.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Support working Missouri families through tax relief policies including a State Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Ensure that low-income Missourians have access to quality tax preparation assistance and the information regarding the federal Earned Income Tax Credit and child care.

Asset Development & Protection

Low income families are more likely to experience crisis due to lack of savings and assets than middle income families. Asset Development is a proven way to help low income people build wealth and stability through home ownership, development of small businesses, and higher education. In addition, participation in asset development programs increases participation in the banking system (moving people away from predatory solutions such as pay day lenders) and increases financial education among participants.

Public Policy Action Strategies

- Assist families in developing financial literacy and building assets for higher education, home ownership, and small business creation.
- Revise the Family Development Account tax credit legislation to increase participation.
- Support legislation to reform pay-day (small dollar) loan businesses and encourage implementation of “fair and reasonable” loan practices.
- Support foreclosure prevention measures such as:
 - 90 day renter notification prior to landlord eviction
 - Mandatory mediation between homeowner and lender prior to foreclosure

Missouri State Revenue

Why we care about the budget

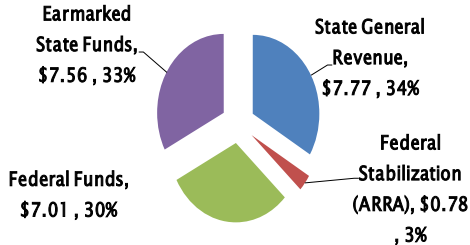
Our state budget reflects our values.

1. It helps us to identify our priorities.
2. It is the way we plan to use our resources to support our priorities.
3. It allows us to assess whether we have sufficient resources to fund our priorities, and gives direction in either cutting services that are a low priority and/or increasing revenue to adequately fund our priorities.

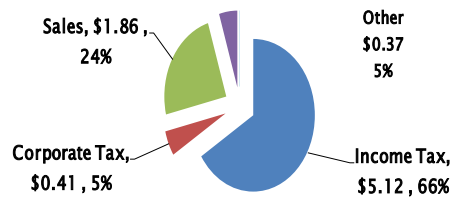
What you need to know about Missouri general revenue

Missouri's total budget of \$22 billion (actual, in fiscal year 2010) is made up of federal funds, earmarked funds (that go to a specific purpose), and general revenue. General revenue, about \$6.9 billion (actual), is what Missouri legislators have to work with when they have to balance the budget.

Missouri FY 2010 Budget All Funds \$23.11 Billion



Missouri FY 2010 Budget General Revenue \$7.764 billion (As Appropriated)



Why Missouri's general revenue is decreasing

Like almost every state, Missouri's general revenue has taken a steep slide over the past 2 years. In May, general revenue was 8 percent lower than it was a year ago.

From 1975 to 2001, general revenue always increased compared to the previous year. Since 2001 it decreased in 2003, 2008, 2009, and 2010.

There are 2 reasons for this: the economy and policy decisions.

1. **The economy.** Many Missourians have lost their jobs. Demand for goods and services drop as a result. Lower demand leads to more job loss. Revenue from income and sales taxes have decreased.

2. **Policy decisions also lower revenue.**

- Tax cuts made in the last 3 legislative session will cost \$326 million in FY2011 (begins July 1, 2010).
- Tax credits (which decrease the amount of taxes owed) increased by 85 percent since 2005. In 2009, tax credits cost more than half a billion dollars.
- Outdated tax structures result in a loss of revenue (for example, not taxing internet sales)
- Outdated administrative structures result in a loss of revenue (such as providing a discount to businesses for filing taxes on time).
- Corporate and individual income and sales tax loopholes allow businesses and individuals to avoid paying the taxes they owe.

During the fiscal year that ends on June 30, 2010, the Governor cut more than \$900 million to balance the budget. In fiscal year 2011 (begins July 1, 2010), the legislature cut more than \$520 million from the Governor's proposed budget, and the Governor announced he will cut an additional \$350 million. **Next year, the projected budget deficit is more than \$1 billion.**

It's time to use a balanced approach

Let's be perfectly clear. We have balanced, common sense solutions.

Closing Unfair Loopholes

Collecting Sales Tax on Internet Purchases. Sales tax is not collected on purchases made over the internet or by catalog. These purchases should be taxed the same way that purchases in bricks and mortar Missouri stores are taxed. *Called the "streamlined sales tax", if fully implemented in FY2011, this could net as much as \$187 million in state and local revenue¹. Twenty-three states have already passed this legislation, including many of Missouri's neighbors².* City and County revenues which support police, fire, libraries and other infrastructures are negatively impacted as internet sales increase.

The "yacht" sales tax loophole. Individuals who purchase a yacht longer than 25 feet do not pay sales tax, but pay a much smaller fee. In turn, they agree to allow the Coast Guard to commandeer the yacht in times of emergency. *Closing this loophole would net an estimated \$6 million per year.*

Tax Avoidance by Multi-State Corporations. Some multi-state corporations avoid paying corporate income tax by funneling profits made in Missouri to one of four states that do not have corporate income tax, and by taking advantage of other loopholes. Missouri should insist that multi-state companies meet the same tax requirements that our Missouri "born" companies do. *Currently, more than half of the states have passed legislation requiring "combined reporting" measures³.* These

¹ University of Tennessee Center for Business & Economic Research, "State and Local Government Revenue Losses from Electronic Commerce", April 13, 2009

² Streamlined Sales Tax Project

³ Center on Budget & Policy Priorities

measures plug loopholes and help multi-state companies to fairly determine the amount of tax revenue due to each state that they operate within. *Enacting combined reporting in Missouri could net as much as \$100 million per year.*

Outdated administrative practices

The Timely Filing Discounts. Missouri provides rewards to state retailers who remit collected sales taxes and payroll taxes on time. While some states provide a “discount” to states that remit sales taxes on time, *no other state* does so for payroll taxes. Eliminating the timely filing discount on sales tax collections would net an estimated \$92 million⁴. Eliminating it on payroll taxes would net an estimated \$40 million⁵.

Sensible Tax Changes

Raising Missouri’s Tobacco Tax

At 17 cents per pack of cigarettes, Missouri now has the lowest tobacco tax in the United States, far behind all states including tobacco producing states. The national average is \$1.42 per pack. Missouri could double its tax and still remain far below the tobacco tax in neighboring states.

Modifying Missouri’s 1931 Income Tax Brackets

The top tax bracket begins at \$9,000 of Missouri Adjusted Gross Income. Adjusted for inflation, this would be about \$128,900 today⁶. Missourians who earn less than \$17,000 per year pay an average of 9.6 percent of their income in state and local taxes. Those who earn more than \$412,000 pay an average of 5.3 percent of their income in state and local taxes⁷. Tax reform that would make Missouri’s tax structure more progressive would generate an estimated \$1.3 billion per year.⁸

Balancing Tax Credits with Other Spending Priorities

Because tax credits are awarded in a process that is parallel to the budget process, there is no way to weigh the awarding of these credits against other state priorities such as elementary and secondary education, higher education, mental health services or services to seniors. Although some tax credits create positive results, we must find thoughtful ways to evaluate their effectiveness and balance them with other budget priorities.

This revenue paper was prepared by the Mo. Budget Project

⁴ University of Tennessee Center for Business & Economic Research, “State and Local Government Revenue Losses from Electronic Commerce”, April 13, 2009

⁴ Streamlined Sales Tax Project

⁴ Center on Budget & Policy Priorities

⁴ Missouri State Auditor, 2010

⁵ Governor’s Budget Book, 2003

⁶ Calculated by Missouri Budget Project using CPI inflation index at <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>

⁷ Retrieved at http://www.itepnet.org/state_reports/whopays.php on May 27, 2010

⁸ Fiscal note for HB2034 retrieved at <http://www.moga.mo.gov/Oversight/OVER10/fishtm/3488-01N.COR.htm> on May 27, 2010.