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Despite the End of Budget Negotiations, Still Time for Responsible Leadership
Statement from Missouri Budget Project Executive Director Amy Blouin

“Throughout the legislative session, budget discussions have pitted one critical priority against another due to a simple fact – Missouri has an ongoing revenue crisis that has no end in sight.

“Negotiations set funding for child care against funding for veterans and medical services for the blind against higher education. Without serious leadership and action by policymakers, these types of critical services will continue to vie against each other for minimal funding.

“Missouri’s K-12 school funding formula will be \$439 million under the required funding level in the next school year. Schools that have already cut staff, increased class size and reduced the quality of education will be faced with further cuts. Programs and services that help improve the quality of child care, and prepare children for success in school were eliminated. The reductions in Missouri’s investment in education will compromise our ability to grow our economy.

“Missouri’s budget crisis isn’t over. Missouri faces 17 more years of budget cuts, putting critical education, transportation and public services at ongoing risk. Although the end of the legislative session is drawing near, there is still time for policymakers to enact balanced solutions that include new revenue, protecting the services that all Missourians rely on and improving our economy both now and in the future.

“There is still time for lawmakers to pass the tax amnesty proposal, providing \$70 million in critical revenue for Missouri services.

“There is still time for legislators to pass the Marketplace Fairness Act (otherwise known as the streamlined sales tax collections mechanism), leveling the playing field for Missouri businesses, correcting a tax loophole, and bringing in much needed revenue to the state.

“There is still time for policymakers to increase the state’s tobacco tax, currently by far the lowest in the nation.

“There is still time for legislators to address ongoing structural problems in the state’s revenue streams in order to build a strong economy and preserve a strong middle class.

“There is still time for our elected officials to invest in Missouri’s future and show the responsible leadership that Missourians deserve.”

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The Mission of the Missouri Budget Project is: To advance public policies that improve economic opportunities for all Missourians – particularly low and middle-income families – by providing reliable and objective research, public education and advocacy.

More information is available at www.mobudget.org.