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Legislature Misses Opportunities to Invest in Missouri's Future
Statement from Missouri Budget Project Executive Director Amy Blouin

“As the legislative session draws to a close, we are disheartened that Missouri’s elected officials failed to enact common sense revenue reforms that will enable the state to maintain its commitments to Missourians.

“The budget that passed did not include any reserve funds or funding for supplemental budget bills. As a result, mid-year budget cuts of more than \$100 million are virtually guaranteed. Even those services that escaped the budget ax unscathed may be impacted once the next fiscal year is underway.

“This is no way to run a state. Hard-working Missourians have invested in their communities, and they expect the state to return that investment. But by failing to enact tax amnesty, the streamlined sales tax, an increased tobacco tax, or other reforms, the state has failed to invest in the future of Missouri once again.

“The state will be funding K-12 education at nearly \$440 million below its own legal requirement. Schools have already cut staff and increased class sizes, and additional cuts will further reduce the quality of education our children receive. Although higher education maintained its funding, as state funding has dropped over the last decade, tuition has soared 83 percent at four-year colleges and 52 percent at community colleges since 2001. Early education services to children were cut by more than \$9 million, including Early Head Start and programs that help to improve the safety and quality of child care centers.

“These aren’t just statistics. Without a well-trained workforce, Missouri will be unable to attract or maintain business. When young adults can’t afford college, their lifetime earnings suffer and they have a higher risk of unemployment. Missouri must invest in its future to compete in a global economy and rebuild from the recession.

“Although policymakers have ignored the writing on the wall for another year, Missouri’s budget crisis isn’t over. Missouri faces 17 more years of budget cuts, putting critical education, transportation and public safety services at ongoing risk.

“To maintain our quality of life, we must invest in ourselves and our communities.

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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.