

SENATOR'S NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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LEGISLATURE TACKLES PRESSING STATE ISSUES

SENATOR LONG WORKS TO ADDRESS BUDGET DEFICITS, TEACHER EVALUATIONS AND OIL SPILL

As the tenth week of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session draws to a close, lawmakers addressed a number of pressing issues. The proposed budget, as well as measures which seek to address millions of dollars in revenue shortfalls for both the current and upcoming fiscal years, are among the important issues pending final action by the legislature. Recent disagreements between House and Senate leaders over proposals to tap \$198 million from the state's "Rainy Day" fund and whether or not to repay these funds immediately stalled the budget and other fiscal measures in the House. Some senators expressed concerns over the hold-up, suggesting that if these measures were not sufficiently considered by the session's mandatory adjournment on June 21, lawmakers might have to return to address the issues in a special session. Responding to the concerns, the House is expected to debate the budget and send it to the Senate shortly.

"We are grateful for the decision on the part of House leadership to send us the budget for our consideration. I am committed to a balanced budget which will not include higher taxes. Hard decisions must be made and some good programs will have to be cut. My goal is to be sure that basic goods and services are protected for our citizens," Sen. Gerald Long said.

In addition, legislators have addressed important reforms to the teacher evaluation system. House Bill 1033, recently signed into law by the Governor, would reform the way teachers are evaluated for job performance. The bill requires yearly evaluations, fifty percent of which would be linked to improved student achievement. The legislation, slated to take effect in 2012, would also mandate that classroom teachers constitute half of the advisory board designed to make recommendations on the evaluations to the BESE. Sen. Long said, "This legislation, which seeks to move our system forward, will ultimately be best for our teachers, students and school systems, by upholding professionalism and integrity."

As efforts to halt the spill of oil continue in the Gulf of Mexico, following the April 20th disaster at the Deepwater Horizon offshore rig, Sen. Long expresses his dedication to support the administration's efforts to protect the coast as Sen. Long noted, "I stand behind the Governor as he continues to assess the situation on the ground and press for information and answers from BP and

federal authorities. My colleagues and I are monitoring the situation and will continue to oversee state efforts to protect our coastline. This is an issue that will impact our entire state in many ways and I will work to make certain that the best effort is being made to protect our state and its citizens.”

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