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GOVERNOR PARSON DELIVERS 2021 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

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JANUARY 27, 2021

JEFFERSON CITY — Today, Governor Mike Parson delivered the 2021 State of the State Address to the Missouri General Assembly.

Governor Parson highlighted several accomplishments the state has made in combating COVID-19 as well as major successes in infrastructure and workforce development despite the challenges of the past year.

Following a recap of 2020, Governor Parson's speech focused on priorities for 2021: education and workforce development, infrastructure, stronger communities, health care, and government reform. Governor Parson also expressed his hope that the legislature will make COVID-19 liability protection and Wayfair a top priority this session.

“Time and time again, our administration has addressed the challenges of our communities and our state head on rather than leaving them for another day, another administration, or another generation,” Governor Parson said.

“It is important that we continue to follow through on key investments in workforce development and infrastructure,” Governor Parson continued. “We must also continue finding ways to strengthen public safety, improve health care, and make state government more accountable.”

Workforce and Education

During his speech, Governor Parson emphasized the importance of Missouri’s children to the state’s future workforce. To strengthen Missouri’s early childhood system, Governor Parson announced the consolidation of several different programs and divisions across three state agencies into a new Office of Childhood.

In addition to early childhood development, Governor Parson also proposed multiple investments in K-12 education, including a fully funded Foundation Formula and the expansion of the WorkKeys curriculum (Career Ready 101) to all 57 existing career centers in Missouri.

For college-bound students, Governor Parson called for an increase of more than $13 million for the A+ scholarship program as well as the continued funding for the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant program.

Infrastructure

Building on Missouri's progress over the past two years, Governor Parson again called for major investments in infrastructure, including $6.3 million for shovel-ready projects at Missouri's established ports and $25 million to fulfill the transportation cost-share program established by Governor Parson's administration in 2019.

Additionally, Governor Parson announced his administration will once again seek $5 million to continue expanding and improving broadband services across the state.

This year's budget proposal will also seek approval for infrastructure projects at 22 state parks and a one-time expenditure of $100 million to clear the backlog of maintenance projects for state assets, facilities, and buildings.

Stronger Communities

During his speech, Governor Parson recalled his challenge to the Missouri Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) Commission to take a leading role in advancing officer training and improving public relations. The POST Commission followed through on this challenge, voting in October to require annual training in de-escalation techniques and implicit bias.

The state also recently granted Lincoln University a basic training center license to establish the nation's first law enforcement training academy at a Historically Black College and University to help recruit more minority officers to serve in law enforcement. The state is currently working to find commitments for all program scholarships for the first three years.

To further support law enforcement, Governor Parson proposed $1.5 million for the witness protection fund passed by the General Assembly during the special session on violent crime.

Governor Parson also expressed his commitment to supporting more coordination among local, state, and federal law enforcement through initiatives like Operation Legend.

Health Care

COVID-19 has drastically changed the way health care is delivered, and the demand for telehealth has increased significantly. Given these changes, Governor Parson proposed over $4 million to support telehealth for individuals with developmental disabilities.

Governor Parson also proposed more than $20 million to establish 50 new community mental health and substance use disorder advocates and six new crisis stabilization centers across the state.

Government Reform

Since taking office, Governor Parson and his administration have continually pushed for greater efficiency, streamlining operations, and saving taxpayer money.

This year, Governor Parson announced that the state will continue these changes with a focus on foster care and adoption. The state's goal is to take a stressful, complex, and often frustrating process and consolidate rulemaking authority into one department.

Governor Parson also proposed a pay increase for state employees to help retain and attract quality public servants for the people of Missouri.

2021 State of the State Special Guests

During his speech, Governor Parson also recognized six individuals for their achievements and commitment to the people of Missouri:

- Ms. Darlene Sowell – Unleashing Potential President and CEO
- Ms. Denise Carter – Unleashing Potential Director of Early Childhood Education
- Ms. Mallory Fox – Fast Track Program Participant
- Ms. Briana Tyler – Fast Track Program Participant
- Ms. Cindy Sheets – Senior Director of Cardiovascular Services for Truman Medical Centers
- Chief Gary Hill – Lincoln University Police Chief and POST Commissioner

Governor Parson concluded today's State of the State Address with a quote from President Teddy Roosevelt, titled "Man in the Arena," in honor of the many Missourians who have gone above and beyond the call of duty over the past year.

"It is an honor to stand shoulder to shoulder with Missourians in the arena," Governor Parson said. "Those who have lifted one another up, pushed one another to be better, and have remained devoted to a cause greater than themselves in the face of critics who will never know the strength it takes to endure these challenging times."

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