

2025 Ozarks Regional Legislative Priorities

1. Support Workforce Development Programs and Address Childcare Barriers

Programs like Fast Track, MoExcels, and the Upskilling Training Fund are critical for addressing the skills gap in Missouri's workforce. We advocate for stable funding and enhancements to these programs, including raising the income threshold for Fast Track eligibility.

Addressing the shortage of affordable and quality childcare is also vital to workforce participation. We support initiatives that increase access to affordable childcare options and bolster efforts to recruit and retain qualified childcare professionals.

2. Fully Fund K-12 Education and Support Teacher Recruitment

Southwest Missouri's public schools and their ability to adequately train our future workforce are key to the competitiveness of our state and success of regional communities. We support full funding of the K-12 foundation formula to ensure students receive the education needed to succeed. Additionally, we advocate for innovative initiatives to recruit and retain teachers in the region and state.

3. Strengthen Missouri's Competitiveness for Jobs and Talent

To maintain Missouri's competitive edge in the fight for jobs, talent and business investment, we support continued funding for economic development programs. These include existing attraction incentives and competitive tax credits, as well as innovative approaches to creating new competitive tax credits. We also advocate for increased support through programs and funding for rural resources and the development of shovel-ready sites.

4. Tackle Housing Availability Challenges

Housing availability and affordability continues to impact many communities within Southwest Missouri. A lack of accessible inventory is an impediment to community and workforce growth. We support innovative state-level initiatives aimed at addressing ongoing housing challenges and expanding affordable housing options.

5. Invest in Strategic Infrastructure

Southwest Missouri's strategic location within the United States makes the region a key logistics hub and asset for Missouri. We support significant investments in transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, highways, broadband, and utilities, to enhance our regional logistics capabilities. This includes backing projects like the \$6 million Route MM improvement from I-44 to State Highway 360, which is ready for funding and implementation, and projects included in the Springfield-Branson National Airport Master Plan.

6. Boost Tourism Funding to Drive Economic Growth

Tourism is a cornerstone of Southwest Missouri's economy, supporting jobs, economic

development, and community vitality. We support increased funding for regional tourism capital assets, as well as increased funding to help local communities market their assets and economic opportunities.

7. Protect Local Control and Revenue Streams

Local leaders are best positioned to address their community's needs. We support the protection of local revenue streams like property and sales tax collections, which fund essential services. We also encourage the legislature to prioritize local control as it considers legislative proposals.

8. Ensure Stable and Robust Funding for Higher Education

Higher education institutions in Southwest Missouri are pivotal to economic growth, workforce success, and community development. We advocate for predictable and sustained funding for these institutions, recognizing their critical impact on the state and region.

9. Enhance Community Growth through Grant Funding

We advocate for the establishment of a state fund dedicated to supporting the local matching components of state and federal grant opportunities. This funding is essential for driving community growth and making strategic investments that have a lasting impact.

10. Support Access to Comprehensive Healthcare and Workforce Investments

With major healthcare employers serving Southwest Missouri, it's critical to have a robust and skilled healthcare workforce to provide comprehensive care to patients. We support targeted initiatives to train, recruit and retain healthcare professionals across the region, ensuring access to comprehensive care for both urban and rural populations.