



Missouri Governor — Michael L. Parson
Office of Communications

**2022 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS – Strong Today, Stronger Tomorrow
GOVERNOR MIKE PARSON**

January 19, 2022
3:00 PM (CST)

Thank you Lieutenant Governor, Mr. Speaker, statewide officials, Judges of the Missouri Supreme Court, and state legislators. It is an honor again to stand before you today as the 57th Governor of the Great State of Missouri.

Once again, we are at an exciting time for Missouri and our future. This past year we celebrated the bicentennial of our state and 150 years of the Missouri Governor's Mansion.

And I am honored to have served as Missouri's Governor during this remarkable milestone for our state.

The First Lady and I were fortunate to be able to tour Missouri and visit communities all across the state and witness their individual contributions to our rich history.

From the Ulysses S. Grant National Historic Site in St. Louis to the Hubble Space Telescope in Marshfield...from Walt Disney in Marceline to Jesse James' birthplace in Kearney...from John J. Pershing in Laclede to Mark Twain in Hannibal...

AND how could we ever forget Maxie the Goose in small town Sumner, Missouri...

After more than 45 Bicentennial stops, the First Lady and I count ourselves blessed to have experienced the history, tradition, and heart and soul of what makes Missouri great.

Faith, family, neighbors helping neighbors... that's who Missourians are.

AND that's what makes Missouri the best state in the United States.

We were also able to host the Bicentennial Parade and Inaugural Ball that was enjoyed and celebrated by Missourians from all over our state.

Our historic parade included over 100 entries that proudly showcased communities all across Missouri...

Including the Lincoln University Marching Musical Storm, the Budweiser Clydesdales, Chinese Dragon Dancers, and the Negro League Baseball Museum.



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It marked the first time in our state's history that an Inaugural Ball was held outside.

And we counted ourselves fortunate to be able to celebrate with thousands of Missourians, many of which had never experienced an Inaugural Ball.

BUT none of this would have been possible without the efforts state government undertook to lessen the impacts of COVID-19.

When I stood before you last year, our limited supply of COVID-19 vaccines were available for only a small group of Missourians.

No one had a roadmap or a playbook, and we knew we faced difficult times ahead.

Nevertheless, state government accepted the challenges and prevailed by focusing on fairness in our vaccine distribution efforts.

While there will always be endless critics to tell us how we could have done it better, the facts are we were the ones in the arena.

We made the tough decisions and NEVER cowered to the challenge.

Today, one of our greatest successes is in the fact that more than 94 percent of Missourians 65 and older, our most vulnerable population, have received protection from this virus.

AND nearly 75 percent of Missourians 18 and older have received a vaccine.

Now, while we have room to improve and encourage all Missourians to consider vaccination...

We have worked tirelessly to ensure that vaccines are available to every Missourian that wants one.

And we couldn't have done it without the dedicated public servants at the Department of Health and Senior Services; State Emergency Management Agency; the Missouri National Guard; Department of Public Safety; doctors, nurses, and health care professionals; and the thousands of local partners, for their bold and heroic actions throughout the pandemic.

Joining us today, are individuals we would like to give a special thanks to...

Michael McMillan and James Clark with the Urban League in St. Louis and Pastor Miles and Janet Miles-Bartee with Morning Star Baptist Church in Kansas City, were instrumental in helping vaccinate some of our most vulnerable populations.



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With these trusted leaders aiding our efforts, we were able to get hundreds of thousands in Kansas City and St. Louis vaccinated.

Additionally, seated in the upper chamber is Colonel Russell Kohl with the Missouri National Guard, who helped lead our state vaccine operations.

Colonel Kohl and our Missouri National Guard members worked around the clock to get vaccines to Missourians as quickly as possible.

Our Missouri National Guard members answered the call... and completed the mission.

Would Michael, James, Pastor Miles, Janet, and Colonel Kohl please stand to be recognized?

Missouri is a diverse state and a one-size fits all approach will never work here.

In this state, we used common sense and took a balanced approach to the pandemic...

AND while that may not seem like a novel idea... When you look to some of the policies and mandates in other states and places... you find that common sense may not be so common.

That's why we never had state mandates or forced businesses, schools, or churches to close.

We protected lives and livelihoods.

AND when it comes to COVID-19 mandates, I firmly believe that the people should have say through their local elected representatives and not be dictated by needless executive action or any one person.

That's why I don't support and have never supported mandates and Missourians can rest assured that my position **WILL NOT CHANGE**.

Today, our economy has nearly fully recovered, and we have the opportunity to make fundamental improvements to our state that will serve Missourians now and into the future.

Missouri is STRONG today and will be EVEN STRONGER tomorrow.

Missouri has a solid foundation and that is something we should all be proud of... Republicans, Democrats, and Independents ... rural, suburban, and urban...



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It is a foundation that has helped propel our state to new heights in just a few short years and has set us on a course to achieve even greater accomplishments.

Unfortunately, it seems success can get purposely overshadowed because positive news doesn't sell headlines. But rest assured, we refuse to discount the good things happening in Missouri.

Whether you live in the booneheel, the Ozarks, St. Louis, Kansas City, or anywhere across the state, our relentless focus on workforce development and infrastructure is paying dividends for ALL Missourians.

Our unemployment rate sits at 3.5 percent, that's below where we were BEFORE the pandemic and below the national average.

And when we had an all time high of 385,000 individuals on unemployment, we knew we had to take action and solve this problem.

Missouri was one of the first in the nation to cutoff federal unemployment benefits...and today, only 21,000 are drawing benefits.

This was the right call and the right thing to do.

We are finding economic success, but with 116,000 job openings across the state, now more than ever, it is important to double down on workforce development and skill up our workers to fill these open jobs.

We can't be satisfied with the same as before. We must focus on making our state even stronger.

Even during the pandemic, we created more than 21,000 NEW jobs and saw nearly \$5.2 BILLION dollars in private investment.

In 2021, we saw new businesses and existing businesses expanding their footprint in Missouri, including:

Deli Star with nearly \$100 million dollars invested and 475 new jobs in St. Louis,

Gateway Studios with \$111 million dollars invested and more than 100 new jobs created in Chesterfield,

M-E-M-C, a semiconductor manufacturing company, invested \$210 million dollars and 75 new jobs created in O'Fallon, and

John Deere Reman with \$11 million dollars and 130 new jobs created in Springfield...



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BUT business investment didn't just occur near Missouri's urban centers.

We saw...

Carlisle Construction Materials invest \$62 million dollars and create 100 new jobs in Sikeston,

Swift Prepared Foods invested \$250 million dollars and created nearly 400 new jobs in Moberly and Columbia,

American Foods Group plans to invest \$450 million dollars and create 1,300 new jobs in Warren County

Amazon created 400 new jobs in Republic,

Frozen Food Express invested \$6 million dollars and created 60 new jobs in Butler,

CoffeeTree Group created 50 new jobs in Marceline, a town of just 2,000 people,

AND we could go on and on.

But the point is, whether in our small towns, big cities, or anywhere in between, Missouri is open for business...and business is GOOD.

The rest of the nation is taking notice and companies are looking to our state for their future business expansions.

AND while we're at it, I want all of you to hear some of the amazing recognitions and rankings our state has earned because we ALL work together:

We are 1st in the United States for On-The-Job Training

We are 3rd in the United States for apprenticeships

We are 3rd in the United States for our business tax index – far outranking all of our neighboring states.

We are 4th in the United States for new manufacturing facilities

We are 4th in the United States for the best place to retire

We are 5th in the United States for our low cost of doing business



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We are 7th in the United States for people relocating to our state

We are 7th in the United States for Tech Manufacturing Growth

Believe it or not...I'm only half way through...

We are 8th in the United States for economic recovery,

We are 8th in the United States for best place to work for nurses,

We are 9th in the United States for military retirees,

We are 9th in the United States for housing affordability,

We are 10th in the United States for our Automobile and Aerospace industries,

We are 10th in the United States for new business expansion,

We are 10th in the United States for site selection,

And now Ladies, listen to this one...We are 10th in the United States for Women in Technology.

Later this evening when we share these rankings with each of you, I hope you promote these wins for every district...every county...every Missourian.

The bottom line is Missouri's economy is STRONG.

With a historic budget surplus and federal dollars coming to our state, we want to build on our past momentum to capture even greater opportunities for the future of Missourians.

But I want to remind you that our economy is strong despite federal funding. When other states will be using federal dollars to fill spending gaps and budget shortfalls...

We will be making investments in the future, because in Missouri, we took a common sense approach to the pandemic, never shutdown businesses, and have always had a conservative and balanced budget.

You will be happy to hear that thanks to record economic performance...

Missourians will receive an additional tax cut this year.



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The tax rate will be reduced to a new low of 5.3 percent, easing Missourians' tax burden yet again.

Thanks to common sense, responsible spending, and working with the General Assembly, this will be the second (2nd) time our administration has cut taxes for Missourians.

However, we must work to maintain this strong economic position by establishing a Cash Operating Expense Fund.

By setting aside an additional 2.5 percent of general revenue, we will achieve financial stability when the rainy days come.

This is the responsible thing to do... this is the conservative thing to do... this is the right thing to do...

From the beginning, we challenged the legislature to support workforce development and infrastructure, strengthen our communities, and improve government.

AND we have achieved some historic wins in each of those areas...together.

Workforce and Education

This session, we must recommit ourselves to helping skill up our workforce and preparing the next generations for the demands of the future.

Over the last few years, it has become more important than ever to provide adults with opportunities to learn new skills and develop their career potential.

In just a short time, and despite the pandemic, our Fast Track program saw a 65 percent increase in participants in 2021.

To our surprise, 80 percent of the recipients are women and 50 percent are first-generation college students.

Additionally, more than 50 percent are enrolled in health care programs, which has become a blessing considering the past 22 months.

We are happy to have two outstanding Fast Track participants from Bolivar Technical College with us here today.

Shanisha Alexander and Bryan Webb are pursuing degrees in nursing.



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And we are proud of these students for their commitment and working toward a better future for themselves and their families.

Would Miss Alexander and Mr. Webb please stand to be recognized?

As you can see, this program is making a real difference for many Missourians and that is why we must permanently establish this program.

In 2019, we also revamped Missouri One Start through the Talent for Tomorrow initiative and today that program is ranked NINTH in the United States.

In just three years, Missouri One Start has assisted companies locating or expanding in Missouri with more than 700 programs aimed at recruiting and training new employees.

More than 76,000 workers have received training through this successful program.

To continue on this path, we must have a talented and dedicated team across state government.

I know that many of you would agree, that Missouri has some of the best of the best in our ranks.

The success of our state relies heavily on these public servants, and we must ensure we are able to recruit and retain quality team members to serve Missouri.

AND that is why we are proposing an immediate 5.5 percent cost of living adjustment for all state employees.

This is long overdue.

Another group of dedicated state team members is my Cabinet.

Our administration wouldn't have success without these individuals leading our state workforce.

Leading 16 departments and 42,000 individuals is no small task, but we couldn't be more proud of the work they do every day.

Would members of my Cabinet please stand to be recognized for the incredible things you have done for the citizens of the great State of Missouri.



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The future of Missouri – and Missouri families – relies upon children being healthy, safe, and ready to learn. We must continue to invest in our children and their education.

My own daughter is a public school teacher, and I know the tough jobs our educators take on. But they answer the call and work hard every day to prepare the next generation of Missourians.

Our students deserve a quality education and their parents demand it.

And that is why we are again fully funding the Foundation Formula.

Our teachers, administrators, and staff work tirelessly to support Missouri's students...

Last year, 95 percent of Missouri schools saw the value of in-person learning and did the right thing by keeping their doors open and our kids in schools where they belong.

AND thanks to their efforts, Missouri ranked 5th in the United States for highest proportion of in-person learning during the 20-21 school year.

Nothing can replace the classroom, and we are proud of those who recognize this and thank them for their dedication to Missouri children.

Unfortunately, Missouri is currently ranked 50th in United States for starting teacher pay and half of our new teachers leave the profession by their fifth year.

This is unacceptable, and we must do better.

That is why we are proposing to raise teacher pay in every corner of this state...

By partnering with local school districts, we can increase the baseline salary for new teachers to \$38,000 dollars...and take the first step in addressing this issue.

I want to take a moment to highlight one of our exceptional educators here in Missouri.

Ms. Beth Houf is the principal of Fulton Middle School and was recently named the National Principal of the year by the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

This marks the first time in our state history that a Missouri principal has earned this top recognition.



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We know the vast majority of Missouri educators get it right day-in and day-out, and Ms. Houf is a shining example of someone who gets it right.

Ms. Houf, would you please stand to be recognized?

No one in this chamber would be where they are today without quality educators in their lives...myself included.

In the current labor shortage, we must make lasting investments in our state's continuing education programs to prepare the next generations for the jobs of the future.

That is why we are requesting \$31 million dollars for our colleges and universities through MO Excels projects. This will help expand enrollment in high-demand jobs.

Additionally, we are investing \$20 million dollars in grant funding for our 57 area career centers to expand career and technical education programs.

With us here today, are students in career and technical education programs that represent schools and communities across the state that will benefit from these investments...

- From Northland Career Center's law enforcement training academy, we have...
 - Major Audrey Strope and Sergeant Nate Wassam.
- From Cape Girardeau Career and Technology Center, we have...
 - Nicholas Hodges, Computer Networking and Security
 - Lydia Strickland, Graphic Design
 - Anwyn Suhr, Digital Media
- From Carthage Technical Center Health Sciences, we have...
 - Olivia Bourgalet
 - Danny Darland
 - Carly Simpson
- From Jefferson City Nichols Career Center, we have Cody Elliot, a 2nd year welding student.
- From Pike-Lincoln Technical Center, we have...
 - Destyni Gabel, Building Trades and Construction



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- Haley Dowell, Auto Collision,
- Joel Mound, Diesel Technology.

It's programs like these that offer a path for students to pursue high-demand, good-paying jobs, and we must continue to support them in this state.

Please join me in recognizing these hard-working students.

After working closely with Missouri's higher education institutions, we are very proud to be able to increase our investment in higher education.

We will recommend funding for the top capital improvement at state community colleges and 4-year institutions.

Combined with the MoExcels projects and scholarship opportunities, this investment will total nearly \$600 million dollars...

AND generate over \$1.1 billion dollars in economic impact for our state.

Infrastructure

As I've often said, workforce development and infrastructure go hand in hand. For our state to be successful, we must invest in both.

Communities across the state are faced with costly public water and wastewater system repair and replacement.

In order for individuals to live, work, and raise a family, the maintenance and improvement of these public systems must be a priority.

The state and local governments must work together to make meaningful and lasting investments that will strengthen every town and county in the state.

Under our proposal, we will make \$250 million dollars available to communities across the state to enhance access to safe drinking water and responsible wastewater...

AND \$150 million dollars to enhance storm water systems.



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While I do not agree with the massive expansion of federal debt, the responsibility falls to us to invest wisely and make smart decisions...we must do what the federal government cannot.

Speaking of strengthening our communities, we are incredibly proud of the progress that has been made thanks to Focus on Bridges. This program set out to repair or replace 250 bridges across the state.

We are now nearing completion of 75 percent of those bridges, and this program's success has allowed us to leverage hundreds of millions of dollars in additional infrastructure investments in every region of the state.

It is critical that we continue making these important investments.

That is why we are proposing \$75 million dollars to continue our Transportation Cost-Share program for road and bridge projects that bring economic impact to our state...

And \$100 million dollars to improve low-volume roads and minor routes across the state of Missouri.

These are the hardest routes to fund and are important to local communities, especially in rural Missouri.

This investment will help us free up additional funding for much needed projects in suburban and urban areas...leaving no region behind.

This year, we are also proposing \$400 million dollars to further increase broadband, the largest single investment in state history.

This investment will increase access across Missouri for rural areas, but also urban areas that are underserved.

With this plan, we will connect 75,000 households with high-speed broadband.

AND invest \$30 million dollars toward constructing and upgrading cell towers to expand wireless networks across the state.

This is another core investment we are making for the next generation and the future of our state...

Agriculture



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Road and bridge repair and broadband expansion are not only important for every Missourian but are critical for our state's number one industry...Agriculture.

For Missouri agriculture to remain strong, we must prioritize the extension of critical agricultural tax credits that support Missouri farmers and ranchers, ag-businesses, and value-added products.

Because we must always stand with Missouri's diverse group of agricultural producers.

These men and women wake up every day to feed and fuel the world, AND this has been especially true over the past 22 months.

When we were facing tough food-supply chain issues...they adjusted, they adapted, and they put food on the table, allowing us to avoid the hardships experienced in other states.

That is why we are calling for \$10 million dollars to expand agriculture innovation and workforce programs.

Investments like this help ensure the agriculture way of life in the state of Missouri can be passed down to the next generations.

Speaking of the next generations, seated in the upper gallery, we have members of the Paris, Missouri FFA Chapter, which was recently recognized as the 2021 National FFA Chapter of the year... the highest award a chapter can earn in the nation.

Out of nearly 9,000 chapters nationwide, we are proud to be home to the National FFA Chapter of the year and even prouder of the Paris students.

Would members of the Paris FFA, please stand to be recognized?

With nearly \$94 billion dollars in economic impact and nearly 460,000 jobs, Missouri is an agriculture state, and we must never forget it.

AND as a third-generation farmer, you can rest assured that agriculture will always remain a top priority for this administration.

Community Investments

Another area of focus this year is on creating more opportunities for our communities.



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To further our goal to use public resources to make meaningful, long-term investments across the state, we will set aside \$250 million dollars for a statewide revitalization grant program to spur local economic development.

This program will help bring economic opportunity to communities across the state, train more workers, define competitive advantages, and bring more jobs to Missouri.

Another asset for communities all across the state, is our state park and conservation network that is enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

More and more people are getting out and experiencing Missouri's great outdoors...

AND this year, we have an opportunity to solidify this state asset and economic driver and expand tourism.

By investing \$69 million dollars to start construction on the Rock Island trail...

We can help establish the largest circular rail-to-trail network in the United States and a world-class, one-of-a-kind destination for travelers coming to Missouri...while also supporting businesses and creating jobs.

Health Care

One of the lessons we learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that we must also support our communities by strengthening our health care networks across the state.

That is why we are asking for a \$34 million dollar investment in rural communities to increase access to telehealth and telemedicine services.

Another historic investment we are recommending is a new multi-agency state health laboratory.

This lab will accommodate the needs of the Department of Health and Senior Services, Department of Agriculture, Department of Conservation, and Department of Natural Resources and join them together on one campus.

This will lead to safer, healthier Missourians and a more efficient use of public resources.

This year, we are also proposing to double the capacity of our Missouri Autism centers.



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This will help more families navigate the challenges of treating autism...

And reduce the backlog for Missouri families desperately needing services.

I want to thank State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick and the First Lady for helping bring this to our attention and working to get this done.

Public Safety

This year, we must take a renewed look at public safety and how best to fight violent crime.

We must continue to support our law enforcement professionals who put their lives on the line to protect our families.

We can do this by ensuring consistent requirements and appropriate penalties to hold violent criminals accountable...

While also protecting Missourian's second amendment rights, just as our administration has always done.

That said, it's not just how we deal with violent criminals, we must make sure those with behavioral health and substance use disorders receive the treatment and support they need.

Last year, with the support of the General Assembly, we made great progress in providing proper treatment options to Missourians by increasing community support through crisis stabilization centers and community behavioral health liaisons.

This year, we are asking to provide an additional \$140 million dollars to support and increase services at health centers across the state.

Last year, we also highlighted the first law enforcement training academy in the country at a historically Black college at Lincoln University.

AND this year, we are building on that investment with over \$11 million dollars for upgrades and to provide more scholarships for law enforcement officers to receive POST certification and put more officers on the streets.



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Thanks to the leadership of Senator Williams, Senator Leutkemeyer, and Representative Roberts we can ensure our law enforcement professionals are using policing strategies and techniques that make us all proud.

With us here today is a very special guest...Missouri State Highway Patrol Trooper Colton J. Beck.

In December, Trooper Beck was attempting to conduct a routine traffic stop when the suspect fled and a pursuit ensued.

The suspect then opened fire on Trooper Beck, striking him in the face, neck, and upper torso.

Despite being seriously injured, Trooper Beck remained calm and assisted his fellow officers despite the threat posed to his life.

He is a proud example of all law enforcement officers who serve this state honorably.

Would you please join me in giving Trooper Beck a well-deserved round of applause?

Missourians respect law and order, but as a former Sheriff it alarms me to see some of the attitudes toward those who have taken an oath to defend our communities and keep us safe.

We must work to strengthen our communities by supporting our men and women in law enforcement.

AND learn from the failed policies in other cities and states to never allow anti-law enforcement measures to take hold in this state.

In Missouri, we DEFEND law enforcement, not defund them.

During my very first state of the state, I laid out our strategy to focus on workforce development and infrastructure...

Now, we have real opportunity to make lasting investments in these areas and the future of our state...

But with these opportunities comes a responsibility to be mindful about the role of government and where and how it should be involved.

Government should invest...not waste;



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Government should lead...not dictate;

Government should support...not mandate;

AND we must all remember that.

In this state...

We have created tens of thousands of new jobs, but we can do more.

We have built hundreds of new bridges and repaired thousands of miles of road, but we can do more.

We have expanded broadband to thousands of homes and businesses, but we can do more.

We have strengthened communities in urban areas, in suburban areas, in rural areas, but we can do more.

AND we are ready to stand with each and every one of you to do more for the people of Missouri.

It is our time...and the time is now.

CONCLUSION

In closing, there's a story from this past year that I want to share with all of you...

In September, I stood on the tarmac at Lambert Airport when a young man made his return home and when a family found the courage to welcome him...one last time.

Corporal Jared Schmitz made the ultimate sacrifice for his bravery in defending his nation during the withdrawal from Afghanistan.

He did his duty with honor and without question to protect freedom for his family, his community, his state, and his nation.

AND in such a difficult moment, one wonders how we can ever make it through...but by taking a look around, you can always find the answer... our people.

When our nation couldn't be more divided...I saw a community that couldn't be closer.



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When a family felt pain and loss...I saw them embraced by friends, neighbors, and total strangers.

In THIS challenging moment...I saw the best of who Missourians are.

And that's why I'm proud to be the Governor of this great state.

AND as we close out these past 22 months and look to our next chapter...remember...our strength is our people.

When times are hard, Missourians move forward.

When someone is down, Missourians lift them up.

These past years have been tough and dividing for a lot of people, but Missourians stay true...they give their best...and they always put others first.

AND we are a better state...a better people... because of it.

When we look to the future and not dwell in the past, when we find solutions instead of problems...when we stand together instead of apart...we can accomplish anything.

We must always Keep Pushing Forward in this state, because no one is coming to do it for us.

Missouri is STRONG today and will be EVEN STRONGER tomorrow.

It is an honor and privilege to serve as the 57th Governor of the state of Missouri.

God bless you, God bless the great state of Missouri, and God bless the United States of America.