

COMING  
UP FOR  
AIR



after  
COVID



The last year has been a difficult one for Missourians. Our friends and neighbors have not only contended with a serious public health threat but have also had to fight government stifling their liberties in ways that would have been unimaginable a year ago. It's no surprise that as fear and government restrictions recede, Missourians may feel like they're finally coming up for air.

But Missouri policymaking could use fresh AIR as well—Accountability, Investment, and Reform. As pandemic restrictions end and life moves back to normal, policymakers have a unique opportunity to reassess where the state is going and enact free-market and good-government reforms that would have helped during the pandemic but will certainly help after it's long gone. With federal stimulus dollars waiting in the wings, policymakers will also have spending decisions to make, and they should make those decisions conservatively, deliberately, and with reform as a top priority. But whether these ideas are funded with federal or state money, having a framework of potential programs and reforms ready for them as they embark on their work is crucial. The ideas presented in this document provide a starting point for the work ahead.

# ACCOUNTABILITY



## **BRING STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORD KEEPING AND COMPUTING INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

- **Establish state-hosted online resources for school districts and local governments currently lacking them**
  - Websites for sharing local government news and resources with taxpayers
  - Permanent email addresses for ALL state subdivisions, hosted by the state, to ensure uninterrupted connection between taxpayers and local policymakers who may currently be using their personal emails for official business; would also ensure Sunshine Law requests can be received and easily tracked for compliance when necessary
  - List the email addresses of all district school board members on a state site so parents can contact their district decisionmakers at all times
- **Upgrade state technological resources**
  - Enhance the Show-Me Checkbook Project to ensure more frequent updates and more robust features so that all funds, including stimulus dollars, are accounted for, and move toward mandatory reporting
  - Upgrade unemployment insurance and Medicaid systems to ensure prompt service and accurate determinations of eligibility
- **Protect telecommuters from the assessment of earnings taxes for which they should not be liable**

# INVESTMENT



## **EXERCISE FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

- To the extent current law makes the existing Rainy Day Fund inadequate for substantive planning for future crises, increase the fund or establish an adjacent fund that meets those needs

## **MAKE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT A PRIORITY**

- Directly compensate career and technical education teachers based on the number of students who earn industry recognized credentials, or IRCs
- Align stimulus funds so that they incentivize workers to work and employers to hire

## **ADVANCE INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES**

- Address the most urgent road and bridge needs identified by the Missouri Department of Transportation by repairing or replacing assets
  - Consider transferring state roads that would traditionally have been maintained by local governments back to the city and county governments that really should be managing them.
- Prioritize the replacement and updating of aging water pipes, street/traffic lights, and other traditional local infrastructure concerns above one-time, short-term spending

# REFORM



## EDUCATION

- Use stimulus funding to award reading scholarships of \$500 to students in grades 3–5 who are at least one grade level behind in reading based on the 2021 or 2022 testing cycle
- Provide financial incentives for teachers (and other state employees) to move toward defined-contribution retirement plans using stimulus funds as a down payment on the transition costs
- Make a direct, one-time appropriation to fund Missouri's Empowerment Scholarship Account Program

## STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Provide immediate and continued support to state and local auditors for ensuring state and federal funds are being spent as they should be, especially in St. Louis County and Jackson County
- Incentivize police departments, school districts, and local governments to come together and reduce the unnecessary duplication of services to maximize efficiency
- Review and streamline state executive departments to ensure they are effectively and efficiently delivering on their missions in the 21st century



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