



WINTON POLICY GROUP

## Governor Parson Delivers 2020 State of the State Address

*Policies Highlighted Include Health, Public Safety, Infrastructure, and Workforce Development*

On Wednesday afternoon, Governor Mike Parson delivered his 2020 State of the State [address](#). During the speech, Parson touted his administration's accomplishments, laid out priorities for this legislative session, and previewed his fiscal year 2021 budget recommendations. A high-level overview of the executive budget was [released](#) in conjunction with the speech, and more details will be available soon. The speech and budget overview both highlighted several priority policy areas: workforce development, infrastructure, public safety, and health.

### **Workforce Development**

Workforce development and infrastructure have been the pillars of Parson's priorities during his time as Governor. Parson highlighted progress in workforce development, such as on-the-job training opportunities and a program that helps incarcerated women prepare to reenter the workforce. In his speech, Parson discussed early childhood education as a tool to prepare tomorrow's workforce. He emphasized a \$33.5 million preschool development grant that Missouri received to help the state better coordinate early childhood care and education. The Governor also proposed additional funding for the Mo Excels program, which supports education and training initiatives tailored to employers' needs. Other budget items in workforce development include:

- \$4.4 million to continue the Fast Track Grant program, which provides tuition assistance to adults pursuing education related to high-demand occupations.
- \$85,500 to expand Career Ready 101 in high school career and technical centers. The program is designed for career exploration and job search preparation.

### **Infrastructure**

Road and bridge funding has been a top priority for Governor Parson, and he pursued alternative funding streams after the defeat of a fuel tax increase on the ballot. In 2019, the Legislature passed several of his transportation priorities: a \$301 million bonding package, \$50 million for cost-sharing on local projects, and \$50 million for bridge repair. Parson used the State of the State as an opportunity to highlight the transportation projects in the

works. The Governor also proposed directing funds from implementing sales tax on online sellers toward debt service and cost-sharing for future infrastructure projects. Other budget highlights include:

- \$5 million increase for rural broadband grants.
- \$50 million to continue the transportation cost-share program, which provides matching funds for local infrastructure initiatives.

### **Public Safety**

During the address, Parson spoke on how mutual concern over violent crime brought him and the mayors from the state's largest cities together. He reiterated his commitment to the Second Amendment, but Parson said he and the mayors agreed on several ways to address community safety. The areas listed were: improving protection for witnesses and victims, increasing access to behavioral health services, and enhancing laws related to violent crime. Public safety funding proposals include:

- \$1 million for school safety grants.
- \$1 million for testing sexual assault kits.

### **Health**

The Governor praised the work of Mo HealthNet Director Todd Richardson and said that his reforms had saved \$84 million thus far. In the speech, Parson called the effort to expand Medicaid on the 2020 ballot a "massive tax increase" and argued this would divert funds from other programs. The Governor's budget recommendations include additional funds to serve individuals with developmental disabilities. He supports \$22 million to eliminate the FY 2020 waitlist of individuals with developmental disabilities requiring in-home services or residential care. The budget also touts \$49 million to fund MO HealthNet behavioral health services for additional individuals with developmental disabilities. Other budget recommendations include:

- \$58 million to continue moving toward rate standardization for developmental disability service providers.
- \$34.9 million to adjust rates for MO HealthNet in-home providers to bring them closer to market costs.