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Missouri Lawmaker Wants to Stop Use of State Money for Stadiums.

A lawmaker's proposed legislation to eliminate a panel which is now considering whether to award tax credits for a St. Louis soccer stadium.

Republican state Senator Rob Schaaf has filed a bill to strip the Missouri Development Finance Board, or MDFB, of its power to grant loans or issue bonds or tax credits. He contends the board has already wasted millions of dollars in a failed attempt to build a second football stadium for the now departed Rams.

Schaaf doesn't mince words over what the board's currently discussing. "And so now if MDFB is going to get \$40 million to build a soccer stadium, then I think they just need to go away."

The city of St. Louis has applied to the Development Finance Board for \$40 million of state tax credits to help finance a stadium for a future Major League Soccer team. The board's expected to announce its decision on December 20th. St. Louis is also poised to ask city taxpayers to approve \$80 million to go toward the stadium in an April election.

Schaaf is highly critical of outgoing Democratic Governor Jay Nixon's recent moves to restrict Medicaid spending by almost \$41 million, while calling for the NDFB to meet and consider the \$40 million tax credit request from St. Louis city for the stadium.

He says Nixon attempted to steer hundreds of millions of tax payer dollars toward building a second St. Louis football stadium in an effort to keep the NFL Rams from moving. Schaaf contends that, at the same time, the MDFB was draining taxpayer money for the same purpose.

"They've cost us many millions of dollars that we'll never get back that they spent trying to build the second St. Louis football stadium, which didn't pan out" said Schaaf. "We're out all those millions of dollars."

The Rams moved to California this year after plans for a \$1 billion stadium fell through. The Development Finance Board had pledged \$50 million in state tax credits to assist in building the structure. Schaaf noted the state is still spending \$12 million a year on the first football stadium built for the Rams, which they moved into in 1995.

He's filed another measure which more broadly addresses the use of tax dollars for sports complexes. Senate Joint Resolution 2 would block the state from entering into an agreement with any sports complex authority which would require the state to pay back any newly issued bonds without legislative or voter approval.

Schaaf says it would put an end to the use of state taxpayer money for stadiums. The resolution, if passed by the legislature, would be required to go to a public vote because it would make changes to the state constitution.

Schaaf thinks it will be warmly received. "I think the people of Missouri would vote for it overwhelmingly."

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