



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# "How to Turn a Bill Into a Christmas Tree"

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Jefferson City - Tax credits have become a very popular way to promote economic development. However, since some groups are able to invest a lot of money in Jefferson City representation, they often go to the most powerful, not necessarily the most deserving. Last Wednesday, as the Senate debated SB 282, a major economic development package, we witnessed tax break after tax break awarded to a variety of powerful entities and industries. I was reminded of the 1988 book "Showdown at Gucci Gulch," an account of congressional passage of the 1986 Tax Reform Act. Gucci Gulch was the nickname given to the corridor outside the Senate Finance Committee hearing room; it was so named because of the gauntlet of high-powered lobbyists that legislators had to navigate as they tried to enter the hearing room.

In any case, I'm trying to operate a bit differently. I'm working to enact tax credits for people who can't afford to hire lobbying firms that have the ear of state lawmakers. My plan to create an earned income tax credit (EITC) for the working poor would provide much-needed opportunities for those struggling to lift themselves out of poverty.

Under my proposal, qualifying Missourians would be eligible for a tax credit equal to five percent of the allowable federal earned income credit.

The federal EITC works to reduce or eliminate the taxes that low-income full-time workers pay. It's one of the most effective antipoverty tools employed by our government and enjoys widespread bipartisan support. In fact, Republican presidents from Ford to Reagan to Bush have fought to expand and protect it, with good reason: it has had a significant impact on the lives of our lowest-paid workers, lifting over five million families out of poverty.

I needed 18 votes out of 34 to amend SB 282; I fell just short. I had 16 commitments and 2 more senators who said they were considering voting for it but did not ultimately do so. I will continue working to persuade them in hopes of amending a future bill on the floor.

In order to win elective office, all but the very wealthy must accept campaign contributions - some of which come from lobbyists - and I'm no different. But although the folks who would benefit from a state EITC may be unable to afford these lobbyists, they deserve representation in the Missouri Senate too - and I plan to provide it.

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