



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# Committees Debate Measures Improving Safety and Education

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JEFFERSON CITY — With committee work continuing at the state Capitol, this week I introduced several measures to Senate panels. Among them, I am sponsoring legislation regulating blasting and excavation activities to improve Missourians' safety and quality of life, and I have also introduced a bill benefiting higher education in Southeast Missouri.

Senate Bill 386, known as the "Missouri Blasting Safety Act," establishes statewide standards for licensing entities that use explosives for excavation purposes. Under the legislation, the Missouri Division of Fire Safety would process license applications, issue licenses and collect fees. Currently, Missouri does not regulate blasting, which is used to break up rock in the excavation process.

Also under the bill, anyone using explosives at a site where blasting has not previously occurred must notify the Division of Fire Safety, the appropriate municipality and fire-protection officials at least two business days in advance. Residents and business owners within 55 miles of the site must also be alerted. Local governments may also enact specific ordinances on excavations under SB 386.

Although blasting is a necessary tool for the excavation industry, it can disturb and even endanger nearby residents. The explosions can shoot rocks, dust and debris into populated areas. Missouri law is woefully behind when it comes to blasting and excavation, and we need tighter oversight to protect our citizens from tragedy. This legislation improves communications between blasters and affected citizens and municipalities.

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The Senate Education Committee this week debated another measure I've introduced. This legislation improves funding for higher education in Southeast Missouri. SB 99 increases the property value needed to be exempt from paying taxes to junior colleges. This is a simple adjustment for inflation that will have a positive impact on institutions such as Three Rivers Community College.

In Missouri, junior colleges have established districts that levy taxes to help fund the institutions. Property above a certain value within these districts can qualify for tax breaks. However, inflation has allowed more and more properties to increase in value and thus qualify for tax-exempt status, which saps these important institutions of needed revenue. SB 99 will adjust the numbers to better reflect established values and revenue earnings.

Together, these measures will improve public safety and higher education in our area.

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*Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid,  
Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*