



# 2008 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



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Dear Friends,

The 2008 legislative session came to an end on May 16<sup>th</sup> and of the bills introduced in the Senate and House this session, 138 of them made it to the governor's desk. Two key pieces of legislation passed this session. One is comprehensive illegal immigration reform which, among other things, will eliminate public benefits and driver's licenses for illegals and will hold employers accountable if they knowingly employ illegal workers.

Property tax reform was another priority to protect Missourians from being taxed out of their homes and businesses. The measure mandates all taxing jurisdictions to roll back tax rates to counter reassessment increases. It also expands tax relief for senior and disabled homeowners.

Also passed was legislation I sponsored, Senate Bill 1139, which makes it easier for people to become organ donors. As of June 20, 2008, there were 1,282 Missourians on the waiting list for an organ transplant.

We are spending a record amount of revenue at the state and federal level, yet we are faced with huge challenges in healthcare. I introduced Senate Bill 1283, the Missouri Health Transformation Act of 2008. It had broad support in the Senate, passing 30-4; however, it was not taken up in the House. This is a very complex issue and I plan to pursue it next session.



You will find more information on these and other important issues in this newsletter.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you in the Missouri Senate. Please contact my office any time you need assistance or want to share an idea. I appreciate and welcome your comments.

*Tom Dempsey*  
Tom Dempsey

# Protecting Missouri Jobs and Services

## Stopping Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigration creates a problem in our state because it threatens the job security and essential services available for Missourians. This year, we passed House Bill 1549, which makes it clear that our state will have zero tolerance for illegal immigration.

### Protecting Missouri Jobs

The legislation bars businesses from employing illegal immigrants. Any businesses that continue to do so will be subject to the suspension of their business permits and licenses. Violators under contract with the state will have their contracts voided and be unable to contract with the state for three years. Contractors that continue to violate the measure will be permanently barred from contracting with the state. The bill also requires employers on state contracts or using state grants, loans or tax credits to participate in a federal work authorization program in order to be eligible for state contracts. Public employers will also be required to participate in the program. The new law also applies to general contractors and subcontractors and makes them potentially liable for instances when fraudulent hiring practices are used.



### The Problem in Missouri

- U.S. census data estimates that 35,000 to 65,000 illegal immigrants live in Missouri.
- INS reports that from October 2004 through October 2005, they removed 3,024 illegal aliens from Missouri.

### Making Sure Municipalities Don't Become Safe Havens

Some cities throughout the nation have adopted policies that would give illegal immigrants sanctuary, but this legislation makes it clear that this practice is not to be tolerated in Missouri. This legislation prohibits municipalities within our state from granting sanctuary to illegal immigrants. Any city, town, or village that does adopt such a policy will not be able to receive any state grants.

### Keeping Public Benefits in the Hands of Honest Missourians

Our state provides public benefits such as housing assistance, food assistance, and unemployment compensation for struggling Missourians. This legislation requires public assistance recipients to prove residency before receiving any benefits. The bill works to make sure that illegal immigrants in Missouri are not able to collect public benefits.

### Detaining and Deporting Illegal Immigrants

The bill also allows law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of anyone arrested or detained in our state. Jailed individuals who cannot prove legal residency will be denied bail. Also, the State Highway Patrol will receive training to enforce illegal immigration laws.

### Denying Drivers Licenses

Allowing illegal immigrants to receive drivers licenses wrongly validates their residency in this country. House Bill 1549 blocks illegal immigrants from obtaining drivers licenses from Missouri. The bill also specifies that a drivers license issued to an illegal immigrant in another state will not be valid in this state.

**We've waited for lawmakers on Capitol Hill for too long. Through House Bill 1549, we are ensuring that Missouri is taking the right steps to fight illegal immigration.**

**-Sen. Tom Dempsey**

# Fairness in Property Taxation

## Stopping Unexpected Tax Increases

Many homeowners are facing hardships from unexpected tax increases due to reassessments. A bill passed this year, Senate Bill 711, protects taxpayers from “back door” tax increases by mandating tax rollbacks, closing loopholes, informing taxpayers, and expanding tax relief to seniors and the disabled.

Every two years, the St. Charles County assessor’s office conducts a reassessment, which determines the value of your property and, in turn, your property tax liability. These reassessments are supposed to make sure that homes are being valued accurately – not raise taxes beyond the inflation rate.

## More Information on Your Taxes

Beginning in spring of 2009, St. Charles County will be required to send taxpayers a projected tax liability to help prepare homeowners to pay their tax bill in December or appeal if necessary. This keeps homeowners from being caught off-guard when their tax bill arrives.

## Mandatory Rollbacks

Taxing entities (libraries, schools, cities, counties, etc.) are constitutionally required to lower (roll back) their maximum tax levy if an area’s assessed value increases more than the rate of inflation. Previously, if an entity did not levy their maximum tax levy in the year before reassessment, they wouldn’t have had to roll back their tax rate in the reassessment year. Senate Bill 711’s mandatory rollbacks require entities to rollback taxes if revenue rises higher than the rate of inflation, regardless of whether they are taxing at their rate ceiling.

## Help for Seniors

An important program in our state helps elderly and disabled residents who might have trouble paying taxes on their homes. The Property Tax Credit program (also known as the Circuit Breaker program) allows these residents to receive a credit on their tax bill for the property taxes or rent that they have paid over the past year.



Senate Bill 711 increases assistance from \$750 to \$1,100 for senior and disabled homeowners. The income eligibility for homeowners also increases from \$27,500 to \$30,000 for singles and from \$29,500 to \$34,000 for married couples. This part of the legislation works to ensure that no one in this state has to struggle to afford a place to live – especially not our seniors.

**These increases for homeowners will begin when you file your taxes for the 2008 calendar year and a property tax qualification chart will be available later this year on the Department of Revenue’s website at the following address:**

**<http://dor.mo.gov/tax/personal/ptc/>**

# Cutting Taxes for Seniors

This is the second year of the phase-in of House Bill 444, which gradually phases in an exemption of state income tax for Social Security benefits, Social Security disability, and non-private retirement benefits, including plans for firefighters, police officers, teachers, veterans, and certain federal employees. The legislation phases in the exemption over a six-year period and is applicable up to the maximum Social Security benefit. The exemption has an income cap of \$80,000 for individuals and \$100,000 for married couples.

2007...	20 percent
2008...	35 percent
2009...	50 percent
2010...	65 percent
2011...	80 percent
2012...	100 percent

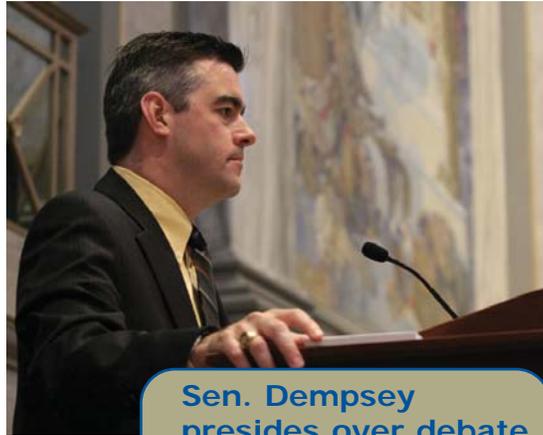
# Transforming Healthcare

## Healthcare: Our Work Continues

Healthcare is a priority of mine and a tremendous challenge. This year I sponsored Senate Bill 1283, “The Health Transformation Act.” There were many components in this legislation – some of which are mentioned in this article.

### Preventing Expensive Reactionary Care

One goal was stressing primary and preventive care rather than emergency care, which is much more expensive. It included a primary care access pilot project to direct those individuals using emergency rooms for non-emergency care to primary care physicians through web-based technology. Also included was an effort to modernize care delivery and expand access in rural areas by recognizing Telehealth (phone based) practitioners.



**Sen. Dempsey presides over debate on the Senate floor.**

## Insuring the Working Poor

It also would have established Insure Missouri, which is designed to help the working poor – those making between 100 percent and 225 percent of the federal poverty level who do not have insurance available through their employer – access affordable health insurance.

Insure Missouri is not an entitlement program; individuals who participate make contributions to a health savings account based on income. The program provides essential medical services, similar to commercial insurance plans, and stresses preventive care.

My goal is to improve individual health and modernize care delivery. It will again be a priority of mine during the next legislative session.

# Affecting Health in Missouri

## Organ Donation Registry

Organ donation provides hope to thousands of people whose health is failing. As each year passes, however, the list of those in need grows and their hope diminishes. Many good hearted people agree to donate organs only to not have their wishes met – only 60 percent of eligible donors actually donate.

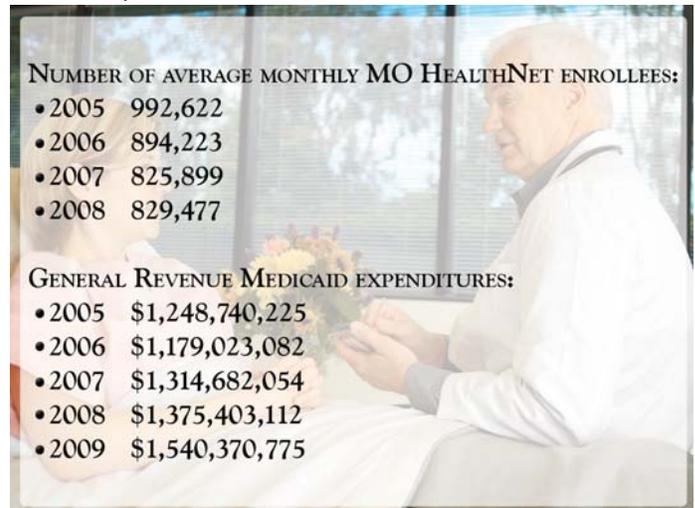
Senate Bill 1139 revises the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act to allow those who wish to donate a simple way to ensure their organs go to those who need them. The number of people waiting for an organ transplant is nearing 100,000 nationwide.

I donated a kidney to my mother. To help someone who has given me so much was an easy decision. There are many who would do the same and more for a family member in need. I am amazed and inspired by the thousands of individuals who wish to provide a gift of life to a person they have never met.

**To learn more visit:**  
[www.dhss.mo.gov/organdonor](http://www.dhss.mo.gov/organdonor)

## State-Sponsored Healthcare

Waste, fraud, and abuse were cut from the Medicaid system (now known as Mo HealthNet) so only those who really need help remain in the system; then aid was increased. Missouri is giving more aid to those who really need it.





# Missouri's Spending Plan

## A World-Class Education

We spent a great deal of time this year ensuring our children will have a world-class education. As a father, I know how crucial a good education is and will be for Missouri's future. To make sure we can compete in the global marketplace, Missouri must do more to better the educational opportunities that exist and see to it we can afford those opportunities.

## Increases for Missouri's Colleges and Universities

Higher education received a 7.8 percent increase in funding for a total of \$1.2 billion. Another important increase for public higher education is a \$48.7 million increase to the Access Missouri Scholarship Program for a total of \$91.5 million in funding. This is a program we created last year to help more Missouri students pursue higher education.

## Benefits for K-12 Education

This year's budget contains a \$121.3 million increase to fully fund the year's phase-in requirement for the foundation formula, which goes directly to Missouri public

schools. The budget also includes a \$3.5 million increase for the A+ Schools program and a \$2.5 million increase for the Early Childhood Special Education Program.

Senate Bill 1066 also benefits our classrooms, by creating an alternative method to certify teachers so we will have more – and more qualified – teachers throughout Missouri.



Funding from the current budget directly benefits Missouri's classrooms.

## Distribution of Each General Revenue Tax Dollar:



\* Revenue, Office of Administration, Elected Officials, General Assembly, Real Estate

Source: Senate Appropriations Committee

# Supporting Our Veterans

## Honoring Those Who Give the Ultimate Sacrifice

When a military member makes the ultimate sacrifice for their country, we all mourn the loss. In order to continue to recognize and show appreciation for the sacrifice made by these service men and women, we passed Senate Bill 806.

This bill requires that U.S. and Missouri flags be flown at half-staff for one full day whenever a Missouri resident is killed in combat.



## For Missouri's Returning Heroes

We also passed Senate Bill 830, known as the Missouri Returning Heroes' Act. The bill caps tuition at state-funded universities to \$50 a credit hour for veterans who served after September 11, 2001. Veterans have 10

years after their honorable discharge to enroll in the program and must maintain a 2.5 or higher grade point average while taking classes. The bill gives veterans in our state an opportunity to expand their chances in the job market by pursuing a degree with less worry about the cost of college tuition.

Although many returning veterans utilize the GI Bill to pay for their higher education, the federal program only provides a flat monthly rate for veterans. This leaves many unable to afford their tuition, room and board. As veterans return from combat, more will be able to pursue higher education more affordably. By lessening the financial burden of tuition to \$50 a credit hour, these veterans will be able to manage the cost of education necessities without struggling to make ends meet.



## 2008 Gubernatorial Appointments

Sen. Dempsey sponsored the following individuals during the gubernatorial appointments process:

- Grace Nichols was appointed to the State Highways and Transportation Commission.
- Tim Schulte was appointed to the Missouri Investment Trust Board of Trustees.
- Mark J. Collom was appointed to the Linn State Technical College Board of Regents.
- Joann M. Leykum was appointed to the Mental Health Commission.
- Patrick H. Kellett was appointed to the Missouri Workforce Investment Board
- Carol W. Gasser was appointed to the Child Abuse and Neglect Review Board.
- Wayne E. Sanders was appointed to the State Advisory Council on Emergency Medical Services.
- W. Craig McGuire was appointed to the Child Abuse and Neglect Review Board.

**If you would like to be considered for an appointment, complete an application form ([www.gov.mo.gov/boards/boardsapp.htm](http://www.gov.mo.gov/boards/boardsapp.htm)).**  
*Please note that all potential appointees undergo a complete background check.*

# Welcome Visitors



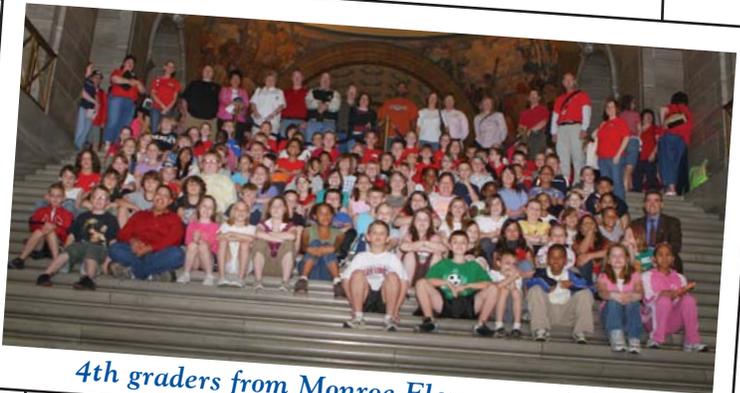
4th graders from Academy of the Sacred Heart.



Teachers from the 23rd District were recognized for attaining National Board Certification.



7th graders from Immanuel Lutheran School.



4th graders from Monroe Elementary School.

## Contact Senator Dempsey

### Capitol Office:

State Capitol, Room 433  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101  
(573) 751-1141  
Fax: (573) 522-3383

E-Mail: [tom.dempsey@senate.mo.gov](mailto:tom.dempsey@senate.mo.gov) — Website: [www.senate.mo.gov/Dempsey](http://www.senate.mo.gov/Dempsey)

### District Office:

P.O. Box 62  
St. Peters, Missouri 63376  
(636) 294-2526

## SENATOR TOM DEMPSEY

201 W Capitol Ave Rm 433  
Jefferson City MO 65101

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