

Office of Senator Robin Wright-Jones
Weekly Capitol Report
Week of April 27, 2009

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**Senator Robin
Wright-Jones**



Addressing Autism In Missouri

April is National Autism Awareness Month and the Missouri General Assembly's continued efforts on this important health care issue is bringing our state to the forefront regarding autism therapy and research. Since the 1970s, the [Autism Society of America](#) (ASA) has used the month of April to educate citizens about autism and issues within the autism community.

Autism is an extremely complex developmental disability that affects a person (usually during the first three years of life) and their ability to communicate and interact with others. This



Missouri is working to find the missing pieces to the autism puzzle. The Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) was created to help devise a plan for how the state can improve

“spectrum disorder” reveals a specific set of behaviors that can affect individuals differently and to various degrees.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1.5 million Americans are living with the effects of autism and 1 in every 150 American children is diagnosed with autism. There is no known cause for autism. However, increased awareness and funding can help families in Missouri and throughout our country.

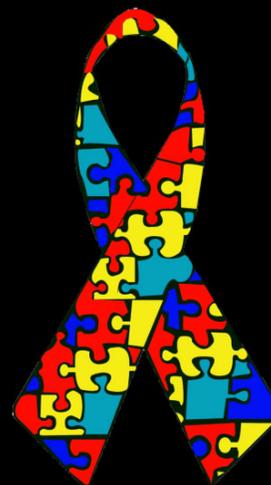
Currently, the ASA estimates that the lifetime cost for caring for a child with autism ranges from \$3.5 to \$5 million. In addition, our nation is facing almost \$90 billion in annual costs for autism. This includes research, insurance costs and non-covered expenses, Medicaid waivers, educational spending, housing, transportation, employment, therapeutic services, and caregiver costs.

Lawmakers in the General Assembly realize the emotional and financial toll autism can have on families. [Senate Bill 167](#), which recently received final approval in the Senate, requires health insurance carriers to provide coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of an autism spectrum disorder for individuals under the age of 18. Senate Bill 167 would prohibit health carriers from denying or refusing to provide coverage to an individual or their dependent solely because the individual is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder.

Final approval in the House of Representatives would send Senate Bill 167 to the governor for his signature.

services related to ASD.

Click [here](#) to find out more information about the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders.



For more information on Senate Bill 167, visit www.senate.mo.gov and type SB167 in the bill search field.

Important Reminder: St. Louis Next-Generation Job Fair

Last week, I informed you about an upcoming youth job fair that will benefit the young citizens of the St. Louis area. The Next-Generation Job Fair will be held in conjunction with the governor's new program, the Next-Generation Jobs Team. Also participating in the job fair is the St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE).

This job fair, geared toward citizens between the ages of 16-24, will highlight Missouri's future careers, including opportunities in green energy, technology, health care, business operations, construction, and life sciences.

I am proud to sponsor the Next-Generation Job Fair that will help our young citizens experience the future of 21st Century industry in our state. Please join me at this youth job fair — your future career awaits you.

The Next-Generation Job Fair is May 2 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Harris-Stowe State University in the Emerson Performance Center.

Utility Bill Help for the 5th Senatorial District

Recently, a bill I have filed in the Senate received a hearing and is one step further in the legislative process. Senate Bill 474, if signed into law, would allow certain public utilities to require deposits for new or continued service only in certain circumstances. For



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NEXT-GENERATION JOBS TEAM

For more information about the Next-Generation Job Fair, you can call Sen. Wright-Jones' Capitol office at (573) 751-2606 or her district office at (314) 533-8000 or e-mail the senator at robin.jones@senate.mo.gov.



Harris-Stowe State University
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3026 Laclede Avenue
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instance, customers who have wrongly interfered with or diverted the utility's service within the past five years, individuals who have their service shut off due to their delinquency in payment, or customers who do not meet the acceptable credit rating would be the only ones that would have to pay a deposit to utility companies.

In addition, no deposit or other guarantee would be required for any customer who has consistently paid at least a portion of his or her monthly utility bill and when the outstanding balance owed is \$500 or less. Utilities covered under Senate Bill 474 include telephone, gas, electric, sewer, heating, and water.

My bill would have to be approved by the full Senate before moving on to the House for similar consideration.

The Senate passed legislation last year, which was signed into law, that ensures citizens are not denied electric or natural gas service during dangerously hot temperatures during Missouri's summer months. [Senate Bill 720](#), sponsored by the former senator of the 5th Senatorial District, established a hot weather rule from June 1 to Sept. 20. The measure also prohibits electric or natural gas companies from shutting off service to delinquent customers on days when the temperature is forecasted to rise above 95 degrees or the heat index is above 105 degrees.

And with summer right around the corner, it's almost impossible to think about heating our homes during our state's cold winters. However, I would like to remind

For more information on Senate Bill 474, visit www.senate.mo.gov and type SB474 in the bill search field.



our citizens about Missouri's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which is available to help Missourians with their winter heating bills. The program is designed with two components:

- Energy Assistance/Regular Heating (EA)
- Energy Crisis Assistance Program (ECIP)

The first program (EA) is designed to provide financial assistance to help pay heating bills for Missourians from October through March. Eligibility requirements for EA are based on income, family size, available resources, and responsibility for payment of home heating costs.

The Energy Crisis Assistance Program (ECIP) provides individuals with additional financing and/or weatherization services funded by LIHEAP.

For more information on this beneficial program, please visit the Missouri Department of Social Services website at www.dss.mo.gov, click on DSS Divisions, Family Support Division, and then on Low Income Home Energy Assistance.

The Missouri Senate produces a weekly general column that highlights the legislative action in the upper chamber throughout the session. If you would like to read more about important bills my colleagues and I are working on for the people of Missouri, please visit www.senate.mo.gov and then click on Senate Newsroom. Much like my weekly column, you can subscribe to this general column to receive this great legislative

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Senator Robin Wright-Jones

resource, which is updated each week during session.

And to find out more information about the issues mentioned in this column or other matters involving state government, please feel free to contact my office.



Senator Robin Wright-Jones
5th Senatorial District

represents a portion of St. Louis City in the Missouri Senate.



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