

State Senator

Gary Nodler

2003 Legislative Report

District 32



Dear Friends,

I want to take this opportunity to share with you some of the highlights and provide updates on some of the legislation that was passed during the 2003 Legislative Session. Due to our state's budget crisis, this was a difficult and demanding session that included a month-long special session in June to address the education and social services funding. I served on the Senate Appropriations Committee and I'm proud of the budget that we developed. It's not the budget that anyone wanted, but it is what was possible.

Despite the fiscal crisis, this was an exciting time in Jefferson City with 90 new members of the House of Representatives, and 12 new members of the Missouri Senate. Many new ideas were considered and we succeeded in passing a number of reform measures that will make real changes in the manner in which Missouri government operates.

I hope that you find this end-of-session update to be an informative look at the actions taken by the General Assembly. If you have any questions, comments or concerns about what was presented here or any other legislative matter please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Missouri Southern Gets New Name

Missouri Southern State College has become Missouri Southern State University-Joplin, as the result of legislation sponsored by Sen. Gary Nodler.

"This name change is long overdue, and it took a great deal of work on the part of the whole Southwest Missouri delegation," said Sen. Nodler. "Missouri Southern is doing the quality of work that a university does, it just lacked the name. We believe this name change will allow Southern to compete more effectively in the educational environment of our region."

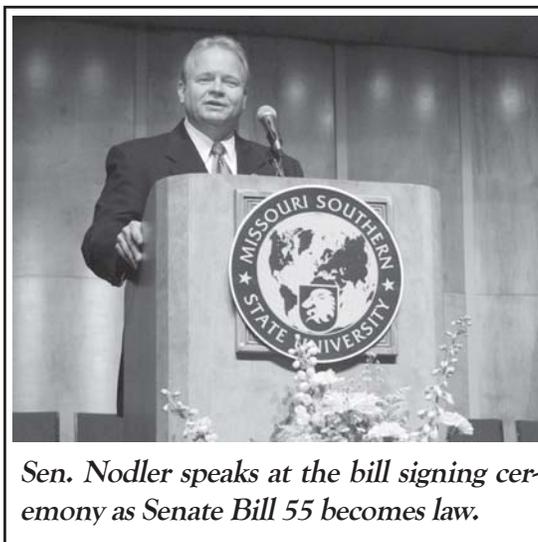
In addition to changing Missouri Southern's name, Senate Bill 55 eliminates the Missouri Southern State College Board of Regents and replaces it with a Board of Governors, that will be set up much like the Southwest Missouri State University Board of Governors. The new board, which will have a statewide mission, will consist of seven voting members and one non-voting member. Five of those members will be from the institution's primary coverage area, and two from outside that area.

Missouri Southern will be required to discontinue all associate degree programs by July 1, 2008. Southern has already established a cooperative agreement with Crowder College in Neosho in an effort to begin this process, and Crowder is expected to assume many of the associate degrees now offered at Southern.

This bill also incorporates language from Senate Bill 56, sponsored by Sen. Nodler, which will allow the Coordinating Board for Higher Education to promote cooperative agreements between Missouri colleges and universities.

These cooperative agreements allow institutions of higher education to offer programs, including graduate degrees, on the campuses of other colleges. Any diploma awarded for graduate degrees under such a cooperative agreement will now include the names of both institutions.

MSSC already has cooperative agreements with Southwest Missouri State University, the University of Missouri system and Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg.



Sen. Nodler speaks at the bill signing ceremony as Senate Bill 55 becomes law.

- See Dade County DFS Story on Page Four -

2003 Legislation Passed

Abortion – Would require women seeking abortions to wait 24 hours. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

Nursing Homes – Would stiffen penalties for substandard homes and reduce inspections for good ones.

Meth – Would limit sale of cold pills used in making methamphetamine, restrict where the medicine is stocked and close certain criminal records.

Bonds – Would authorize \$400 million in revenue bonds to fill in this year's and next year's budgets.

Guns – Would allow sheriff to issue permits to eligible people to carry concealed weapons. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

Sales Tax Holiday – Would exempt sales of clothing, computers and school supplies from taxes during three days beginning August 2004.

Taxes – Would end some tax breaks, give delinquent taxpayers amnesty and improve tax collections to generate \$75 million to \$100 million.

Teacher Retirement – Would let the Public School Retirement System charge teachers and school districts more to keep fund solvent.

Prescription Drugs – Would keep generic drugs in the state's SenioRx program by requiring lower rebates.

Gun Lawsuits – Would bar lawsuits by cities in Missouri against gunmakers. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

MoDOT – Would create an inspector general's post outside the department to investigate complaints.

Tort Reform – Would restore caps on noneconomic damages, limit where lawsuits can be filed. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

Foster Care – Would open court proceedings, speed up hearings and penalize negligent foster care workers. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

SPAM – Would require unsolicited commercial e-mail to include "adv" in subject line.

Unemployment – would allow bonds to be issued to pay unemployment benefits and tighten eligibility requirements. *(Vetoed by Governor)*

Boating Safety – Would require people younger than 21 to pass a boat safety course beginning in 2005 before they could legally drive a boat on Missouri lakes.

2003 Legislation Failed

Workers' Comp – Would have required that work be the dominant factor of injury to be eligible for workers' compensation benefits.

Abortion Lawsuits – Would have allowed parents to sue someone who takes their daughter across state lines to get an abortion without parental consent.

Education Funds – Would have gradually put gaming revenue into the Classroom Trust Fund for distribution on per-pupil basis.

Crime – Would have allowed police to detain a suspect for 30 hours without charging the person with a crime. Would have encouraged sentencing alternatives for nonviolent offenders.

Property Taxes – Would have limited growth in assessed valuation to 5 percent over two years for homeowners 65 and older.

Telecommunications – Would have deregulated high-speed Internet service.

Campaign Finance – Would have let the Ethics Commission require electronic filing by legislative candidates by 2005.

Environment – Would have made it harder for the Department of Natural Resources to issue rules.

High School Sports – Would have set rules for high school sports and extracurricular activities.

Presidential Primary – Would have eliminated the state's presidential primary.



Students from Granby Elementary School met with Sen. Nodler during a visit to the State Capitol.

Lawmakers Look for Ways to Make Government More Efficient

With 12 new members in the Senate and 90 new members in the House of Representatives, lawmakers saw a unique opportunity to make some real improvements in the manner in which Missouri state government did business. Lawmakers approved several reform measures including one sponsored by Sen. Gary Nodler that creates a subcommittee on Competition and Privatization within the Joint Committee on Legislative Research.

“With so many new members, there were a lot of fresh ideas and new outlooks,” said Sen. Nodler. “No one wants business as usual anymore.”

Under SCR 13, the Subcommittee on Privatization would include members who are both lawmakers and private citizens. The subcommittee will be charged with investigating ways to reduce costs to state government and increase quality of services to citizens through utilizing private resources within certain aspects of the state government.

Members will begin meeting by the first Friday following the Legislature’s veto session in September, and will report to the General Assembly by Jan. 1, 2004 and again by Dec. 31, 2004.

“The idea of privatization – the transfer of services or assets from government to private firms – has been around since the 1960s,” Sen. Nodler said. “Privatization is an excellent way to cut costs and avoid raising taxes.”



Sen. Nodler recently presented Caryl MacMorran with a special Senate Resolution honoring her for receiving the Missouri Preservation Award for her work with the historic William H. Phelps house in Carthage.

Local Roads to be Renamed

The State of Missouri has honored Newton County’s own favorite son George Washington Carver with a section of highway named in his honor.

Sen. Gary Nodler successfully passed Senate Bill 697, which will rename a portion of Interstate 44 in Jasper and Newton counties.

“Dr. Carver was a student of life and a great scholar, whose accomplishments have enriched the lives of generations of Americans,” said Sen. Nodler. “Renaming a section of this highway is one way Missouri can honor this remarkable man.”

In addition, Sen. Nodler served as co-sponsor of Senate Bill 289, which designates the portion of Highway 71 within Jasper County the Trooper Charles P. Corbin Memorial Highway.

Trooper Corbin was killed on Sept. 15, 1953, on US-71, when a tractor-trailer truck struck his patrol car. He was the fourth officer to be killed in the line of duty.

The Senator also co-sponsored Senate Bill 598, which establishes the Corporal Bobbie J. Harper Memorial Highway on U.S. 71 in McDonald County.

Area Residents Receive Gubernatorial Appointments

This session Sen. Gary Nodler successfully sponsored gubernatorial appointments of these Southwest Missouri residents:

- Dwight Douglas – Missouri Southern State College Board of Regents
- Jane B. Wyman – Missouri Southern State College Board of Regents
- Stacey L. Allen – Student Rep. on the MSSC Board of Regents
- Larry Neff – Missouri Development Finance Board (Reappointment)

Sen. Nodler Appointed to Education Commission

The governor appointed Sen. Nodler to the Missouri Commission on the Future of Higher Education, which was created earlier this year. The panel, made up of 29 leaders from the legislative, education and business fields, will be responsible for making recommendations on how to expand the link between the state’s higher education and business communities. This is a vital link in any effort promoting economic development.

“The future of education and the future of our state’s economy are closely linked,” said Sen. Nodler. “The stronger our higher education system becomes, the more our business community prospers – that makes a positive equation for sound economic growth.”

Sen. Nodler Preserves Dade County DFS Office

As a cost-saving measure, earlier this year the Missouri Department of Social Services announced plans to close 14 Division of Family Services offices in smaller counties located in mostly rural areas. The Dade County office in Greenfield was included on the closing list. While DFS would have continued to provide services to the people of Dade County, they would have operated in another state-owned facility.

“The Division of Family Services office is one of the most important government agencies in Dade County,” said Sen. Nodler. “Closing it would have made it much more difficult for those in need to access services.” Working with lawmakers representing other rural areas, Sen. Nodler was successful in stopping the effort to close the DFS offices.

“When we looked into this plan, we realized it would not really save much money,” Sen. Nodler said. “The employees were going to be shuffled to other offices and it would have meant more telephone calls and mileage to reimburse, not to mention the inconvenience it would have meant for those accessing DFS services.”

New Law Will Protect Missouri’s School Children

Missouri’s children will be safer as a result of legislation passed this session that will make it a Class A felony to manufacture a controlled substance within 2,000 feet of a school. Sen. Gary Nodler successfully amended this language onto Senate Bill 39, which makes a variety of changes that toughen Missouri’s drug laws.

In recent years, Missouri has seen a rise in the manufacture of methamphetamine, a powerful, highly addictive drug. Unlike other substances, meth can be manufactured in dangerous makeshift labs.

“Often these makeshift labs are located in our neighborhoods and near our schools,” said Sen. Nodler.

The Jasper County Drug Task Force and the Missouri Police Chiefs Association were among the law enforcement agencies that endorsed this legislation.

“The horror stories surrounding the meth problem in Missouri are frightening,” Sen. Nodler said. “It’s crucial that we protect our children from the damage done by these drugs.”

State Funds Benefit the 32nd District

Missouri Southern State College -

\$20,373,791 Operating Budget for
FY 2004

Governor’s Withholding - \$1,696,982

Crowder College - \$4,222,071

Operating Budget for FY 2004

Governor’s Withholding - \$117,583

Battle of Carthage State Historical Site

Operating Budget for FY 2004 - \$2,203

Joplin Regional Center - \$1,892,943

Operating Budget for FY 2004

Juvenile Court - Jasper County

Personnel Reimbursement - \$97,702