

PRESS RELEASE



STATE SENATOR MAIDA COLEMAN - 5TH SENATE DISTRICT

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State Senator Maida Coleman Hits New Legislative Session Running

*Election Reform, Public Health Bills Top
Comprehensive List of Proposed Legislation*

Senator Maida Coleman, D-St. Louis, has introduced a series of innovative measures for the year's legislative session, which began Jan. 8th and runs to May 16th.

"We have just four months to handle a year's worth of business," Coleman said. "There's no time to stand and watch the calendar go by."

In light of recent, well-publicized and hotly contested ballot initiative petition efforts, Coleman has introduced a measure giving election authorities more time to verify signatures for petitions. Senate Bill 50 gives election authorities 30, rather than 14 days to complete verification of initiative and referendum petition signatures.

"The initiative process gives the people the power to put any issue on the ballot – whether the Legislature wants it voted on or not," Coleman said. "It's not an easy process, though – it requires a large number of signatures. This bill ensures that the efforts of petitioners are not laid to waste by an unrealistic signature verification deadline."

Coleman's Senate Bill 92 would strengthen regulatory oversight of lead poisoning prevention efforts. Among several provisions, the act would establish "The Advisory Committee on Lead Poisoning Prevention" to develop and oversee a statewide program for the prevention, screening, diagnosis, and treatment of lead poisoning.

"Lead poisoning is a scourge on our citizens – especially our vulnerable children," Coleman said. "Anything we can do to educate people on its devastating effects and reduce its threats should be done and done today."

Coleman also introduced legislation requiring police officers to give more detailed information before administering tests for the presence of drugs or alcohol. Senate Bill 91 requires officers to inform the person on why the test is requested; that the test is admissible to establish probable cause to arrest, but that the test is not admissible as evidence of blood alcohol content; and that, if the test establishes probable cause for an arrest, the person would need to submit to another test.

"Law enforcement needs to be able to do their jobs," Coleman said, "But people need to be aware of their rights during the drug and alcohol testing process, too."

Another Coleman measure, SB 48, would require all security guards and security guard firms in Missouri to be licensed by the state's insurance department.

"This is just a matter of public safety," Coleman said. "Having an accurate, concise record of the people and companies performing security and guard services will be of great benefit to all parties."

Coleman's Senate Bill 49 expands the crime of first-degree property damage to include damage done to a vehicle during the act of breaking in and/or stealing it.

"Having your car broken into or stolen is bad enough," Coleman said. "Having it damaged in the process is an added insult. This bill should serve to deter many would-be thieves."

Coleman, who recently secured a Senate leadership post as Assistant Minority Floor Leader – the first African American and the first woman to do so – is well aware of the many challenges facing the State Legislature this year and well prepared to meet them head on.

"This is a tough year, a tough budget, a tough session," Coleman said. "But we'll get through it, just as we have over the 180 or so years of our great state's history. In the meantime, I'm committed as ever to advancing measures that improve the quality of life and heighten the level of safety for all Missourians."

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