

PRESS RELEASE



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END OF SESSION REPORT

JEFFERSON CITY – This session was again challenging and difficult because of the impact a slowing economy has had on our budget. Serving a second year as a member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations, which dealt firsthand with the budget shortfall, I saw how many people will be affected by cuts in funding. I fought hard to protect programs and policies that serve our district but in the end was disappointed by the lack of Republican support for education funding. We had a great opportunity to make a difference and uphold standards that protect the future of our children, the elderly and disabled, which was missed because of political agendas under the Republican stronghold on state government.

Governor Bob Holden has called us all back into special session, slated for June 2, to reconsider the budget. Again, we have a great opportunity to fully fund the services society's most vulnerable citizens depend on for everyday living. I'm optimistic that this time it will not be passed over. I expect House and Senate conference committees to come up with a plan that benefits all Missourians.

There were some highlights of the 2003 session that will improve the quality of life for you, your family and your neighbors, including foster care reform, nursing home reform, the implementation of a statewide AMBER alert to help locate missing children, and the Missouri Downtown and Rural Economic Stimulus Act (MODESA), which among other things helps keep the Ford manufacturing plant in Hazelwood up and running. Please take the time to look over the following list of key legislation passed by the General Assembly.

Again, thank you for allowing me to serve you. My job is to keep you informed and let your voice be heard in the Capitol. I welcome any input and would appreciate any opinions on current legislation and suggestions on how I can be of better service to you. Please feel free to call me at (573) 751-2606 or email me at maida_coleman@senate.state.mo.us.

Legislation Passed by the 2003 General Assembly

- Abortion - HB 156 requires women to wait 24 hours after consulting a doctor before having an abortion. The bill also requires both parties to sign a statement that health risks were discussed.
- Agribusiness - SB 84 allows “new-generation” co-op owners and ethanol producers to take advantage of an existing tax credit incentive plan on a quarterly, rather than annual, basis.
- Boating Safety - SB 1 requires people younger than 21 to pass a boating safety course in order to drive a boat in Missouri starting in 2005.
- Business Advocacy - SB 69 establishes the “Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board,” designed to serve as liaison between state agencies and small businesses.
- Child Protection - AMBER Alert - Senate Bill 30 establishes “Alert Missouri,” a statewide communications program for tracking child abductions.
- Concealed Weapons - HB 349 provides for the issuance of permits to carry concealed weapons for qualified applicants over the age of 21.
- Crime - SB 5 helps reduce corrections expenses by curbing some sentencing terms imposed in certain, non-violent cases. Sex Offender Registry - SB 184 publishes Missouri’s sexual offender registry on the Internet.
- Drug War - SB 39 creates the Missouri Sheriff’s Methamphetamine Relief Team (MoSMART) and makes it a felony offense to produce meth within 2,000 feet of a school.
- Election Reform - Federal Compliance - HB 511 revises state election laws to comply with the Help America Vote Act of 2002.
- Emancipation - HB 640 designates June 19 of each year as “Emancipation Day,” a state holiday. This day is also referred to as “Juneteenth,” which commemorates June 19, 1865, which was the day the last slaves were informed of their freedom.
- Foster Care Reform - HB 679 allows parents to videotape meetings with the Division of Family Services, places higher accountability standards on DFS employees, privatizes foster care services when appropriate and requires the DFS to show evidence, rather than probable cause, in abuse allegations before a child could be removed from the care of his or her biological parents.
- Government Efficiency - SCR 13 creates a “Competition and Privatization” subcommittee within the Joint Committee on Legislative Research, which would study ways the state could reduce costs and increase efficiencies by making the best use of competitive bidding and sub-contracting practices. SB 299 creates the “Missouri Sunset Act,” which has each newly enacted state program undergo a legislative review before it is re-authorized.
- Gun Manufacturers - SB 13 restricts the filing of lawsuits by municipalities and the state against firearm dealers and manufacturers.
- Initiative Petitions - SB 50 affords more time to verify signatures collected in citizen-driven efforts to put petitions and referendums before a vote of the people.

- Health Care - SB 407 requires Missouri health insurance providers to cover routine patient costs incurred for FDA-approved drugs and devices.
- Nursing Care - The Elder Abuse and Nursing Home Reform Act of 2003 - Under Senate Bill 556, facilities in which serious abuse or neglect occurs face fines up to \$25,000 per day. Nursing home administrators who try to hide incidents of serious abuse or neglect face felony prison sentences. The bill also creates a fund for nursing home improvements, requires increased background checks of care providers and protects employees calling attention to abuse from retribution.
- Religious Freedom - SB 12 raises the standards a government entity must meet before attempting to alter, limit or restrict the free exercise of religion.
- Patriotism - SR 433 recognizes the efforts of the United States and other countries in the coalition working to bring democracy to the people of Iraq.
- Sales Tax Holiday - SB 11 creates a “sales tax holiday” to help Missouri families as they buy clothing and supplies for children returning to school. This bill suspends the collection of sales taxes on back-to-school items for three days during the second weekend each August.
- Securities - HB 380 - Missouri Securities Act - This bill substantially revises and modernizes the securities regulation laws, incorporating many provisions of the Uniform Securities Act.
- SPAM (unsolicited email) - HB 228 curbs unwanted commercial e-mail, or “spam.” The measure requires most senders of unsolicited commercial email “tag” their messages with a special code in the subject line to facilitate filtering software.
- Tort Reform - SB 280 is intended to help sustain the availability and affordability of basic health care by establishing common-sense limits on medical malpractice cases and similar civil court actions.
- Transportation - HB 668 is designed to increase oversight of, and generate further accountability within the state’s transportation department. The bill enables the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight to hire a director to perform specific investigations, reviews and audits within MoDOT.
- Unemployment - SB 2 allows the state to sell up to \$100 million in bonds to help replenish Missouri’s dwindling unemployment compensation fund.

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