



NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Gary Nodler
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PASSES LEGISLATION TO RENAME MSSC AS MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY-JOPLIN

JEFFERSON CITY -- The Missouri House of Representatives today gave final approval to legislation sponsored by Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, and Rep. Bryan Stevenson, R-Joplin, which will rename Missouri Southern State College as Missouri Southern State University-Joplin.

“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.”

The effort to rename Southern had been unsuccessful in previous legislative sessions, and was nearly derailed today by an amendment in the House of Representatives that would have changed Missouri Western State College’s name to Missouri Western State University. Rep. Stevenson and other members of the Southwest Missouri delegation were able to defeat this amendment, which many believe would have killed the bill.

“This took a lot of work in the House, and there was substantial opposition at first,” Rep. Stevenson said. “Once we explained about the intense competition from Pittsburg State University, we picked up support.”

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.

“This change in the Board of Regents reflects the changes that have already taken place at Missouri Southern,” said Sen. Nodler. “MSSC is no longer a Joplin College, or a Southwest Missouri college, it is truly a statewide university. This fine institution recruits students not only from throughout the state, but from throughout the country.”

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 will be beneficial not only to the Joplin area, but to the Missouri University higher education system as a whole, by making us more competitive with the Kansas system and by making it more cooperative within the Missouri University system,” said Rep. Stevenson.

This bill also incorporates language from Senate Bill 56, sponsored by Sen. Nodler, which would 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.

“Cooperative agreements go a long way in promoting Missouri’s colleges and universities,” Sen. Nodler said. “This region is in a unique position because we border three other states, that all offer graduate degree programs within easy driving access. Southern has lost a lot of quality students who crossed the border to earn a master’s degree.”

MSSC already has cooperative agreements with: Southwest Missouri State University, Masters in Business Administration, Masters in Educational Administration, Masters in Elementary Education or Reading Specialist, Masters in Social Work, Masters in Accountancy; University of Missouri – Kansas City, Masters of Science in Nursing (Family Nurse Practitioner); and Central Missouri State University in Warrensburg, Masters in Criminal Justice.

“This was truly a cooperative effort by all the members of the Southwest Missouri delegation,” Sen. Nodler said. “We all realized that this legislation will benefit our entire region and will help us keep Missouri students in Missouri.”

In addition to Sen. Nodler and Rep. Stevenson, others working to pass this legislation included Rep. Steve Hunter, R-Joplin; Rep. Ron Richards, R-Joplin; Rep. Kevin Wilson, R-Neosho; Rep. Marilyn Ruestman, R-Joplin; Rep. Larry Taylor, R-Shell Knob; and Rep. Ed Emory, R-Lamar.

“I want to express my appreciation to President Pro Tem Peter Kinder (R-Cape Girardeau) and Senate Majority Floor Leader Michael Gibbons (R-Kirkwood), for dedicating a great deal of time early in the session for floor debate on this bill,” Sen. Nodler said. “I also want to thank Minority Floor Leader Ken Jacob (D-Columbia) for his substantial contributions to this legislation.”

Having been passed by both the Senate and the House, SB 55 will now be sent to the governor for his signature.

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