



NEWS RELEASE

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE COLLEGE BECOMES MISSOURI SOUTHERN STATE UNIVERSITY-JOPLIN AT CEREMONIAL SIGNING TODAY

JEFFERSON CITY -- In a special ceremony today, the governor signed Senate Bill 55, which changes Missouri Southern State College to Missouri Southern State University-Joplin. Sen. Gary Nodler, R-Joplin, the bill's sponsor, and other members of the Southwest Missouri legislative delegation were on hand for the event held outside Webster Hall.

"For many years Missouri Southern has done the quality of work that a university does, it just lacked the name," said Nodler. "This name change gives them the recognition they have deserved for so long."

Southern has had an international mission since 1995, and this bill re-emphasizes it as a statewide institution with an international or global mission.

"This name change will enhance our visibility and credibility not just in Missouri, but throughout the world," said Dr. Julio León, president of Missouri Southern. "In many parts of the world the college designation indicates high school level. The term more accurately describes our institution. As we continue to enhance our international mission, this name change will be a valuable tool in our efforts to recruit students."

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.

"We are very excited about this name change," León said. "It's going to be good for the college, for Joplin and for the entire Southwest Missouri region."

According to Nodler, this new law will allow the Coordinating Board of Higher Education to offer programs, including graduate degrees, on campuses of other colleges. Any diploma awarded for graduate degrees under such a cooperative agreement will now include names of both institutions.

“Cooperative agreements go a long way in promoting Missouri’s colleges and universities,” said Nodler. “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.”

During several previous legislative sessions, Southwest Missouri lawmakers were unsuccessful in passing a Southern name change bill.

“Getting this legislation passed took a great deal of hard work on the part of the entire Southwest Missouri delegation,” Nodler said. “This year we were finally successful in showing our fellow lawmakers what a fine school Missouri Southern is and that it deserves the designation of university.”

In addition to Sen. Nodler, others working on passage of this legislation included Rep. Bryan Stevenson, R-Joplin, who was the House sponsor; 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.

At today’s ceremony the governor also signed Senate Bill 598, which establishes the Corporal Bobbie J. Harper Memorial Highway on U.S. Highway 71 in McDonald County. Sen. Doyle Childers, R-Reeds Spring, was the sponsor of this legislation and Sen. Nodler served as co-sponsor.

All new laws become effective on Aug. 28.

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