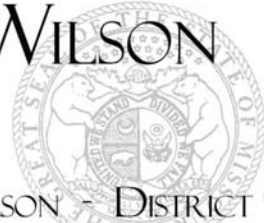




SENATOR YVONNE S. WILSON

NEWS RELEASE



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senator Yvonne Wilson Introduces Bill to Fund Programs Aimed at Reducing Teen Smoking Rates

JEFFERSON CITY— State Sen. Yvonne Wilson, D-Kansas City, introduced legislation on the opening day of the 93rd General Assembly, Jan. 5., that would put approximately \$7 million behind efforts to prevent Missouri youth from smoking.

Specifically, Senate Bill 152 would create the Youth Smoking Prevention Trust Fund, which would be funded by money received under the Master Settlement Agreement, a national lawsuit that 46 states brought against tobacco manufacturers in 1998.

“The goal of this bill is to reduce the number of teens who smoke,” Wilson said. “Considering the available resources, it is high time we organize our anti-tobacco efforts before even more of our youth fall victim to tobacco addiction.”

Currently, the number of Missouri high school students who smoke is nearly 4 percent higher than the number of Missouri adults who smoke. Missouri’s smoking rate is the third highest in the country.

“We can’t ignore these numbers, especially now that we have the means to implement effective programs to address this ever-present problem with youth smoking,” Wilson said. “By financially backing these preventative measures today, we will be saving money in the long run because later treatment for health problems caused by youths smoking will cost even more down the road.”

Under SB 152, a Commission for Youth Smoking Prevention would be created to review successful programs with similar goals in different states. The commission would then choose which program would be best suited for Missouri.

“It all comes down to caring for the well-being, the health and the future of our children,” Wilson said. “Because the revenue is ready and available, we can use it as a way to show we care. Missouri’s high tobacco-use rates can and will be corrected. It might be a long road to get there, but I will stick with it to the end.”

In this current legislative session, Wilson’s bill will be referred to a committee before it returns to the senate floor for debate by the full body.

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