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Sen. Green Protects Working Families

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Protections for working families gained significant ground this session under the leadership of Sen. Tim Green (D-North St. Louis County).

Sen. Green was instrumental in fighting off harmful legislation and restoring some of the major budget cuts proposed by Governor Blunt. In addition, Sen. Green was the catalyst for several major studies that will examine issues that set in opposition Missouri working families against large corporations like Wal-Mart Stores.

One of Sen. Green's main focuses this session was highlighting how the flawed policies supported by Gov. Blunt will shift the cost of private business onto the backs of Missouri tax payers.

Sen. Green convinced the GOP leadership, for example, to conduct a study on the improper use of tax increment financing (TIF), which funnels tax money away from the state and into the hands of private corporations. Sen. Green will serve on a special legislative committee that will study TIF abuses and will recommend make needed TIF reforms.

"Tax increment financing is often used as corporate welfare," Sen. Green said. "We need to ask ourselves as a state why we are giving tax breaks to huge corporations such as Wal-Mart, which then turn around and pay their employees such low wages, they are forced and advised by management to seek state assistance for healthcare."

Likewise, Sen. Green fought massive cuts to Medicaid by arguing that pushing 90,000 more Missourians into the ranks of the uninsured would end up costing taxpayers more in the end.

"Cutting people off Medicaid is just another way to shift costs," Sen. Green said. "When hospitals have to start picking up the slack, medical costs will rise, which in turn will increase all our insurance rates."

"Reducing the state's cost for health care also frees up more money for corporate tax breaks. In turn, these corporations provide less and less healthcare for their employees who also end up in the ranks of the uninsured," Sen. Green said.

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Part of Gov. Blunt's budget cuts included the closing of the Bellefontaine Habilitation Center in St. Louis. Through late-night negotiations, Sen. Green restored \$24 million in state and federal funds for the center, which will remain open for at least one more year if Gov. Blunt does not veto the budget item.

"The Governor's proposal to close Bellefontaine would be detrimental to hundreds of residents of my district," Green said, "These vulnerable citizens are an easy target, because they have no political voice, and I am very satisfied to know that I have been able to do something for my most vulnerable neighbors this session. I can sleep better at night knowing I did all that I could to save this center."

In addition to his fight against budget cuts, Sen. Green led the charge against GOP legislation that would further deteriorate the rights of hard working Missourians.

SB 185, sponsored by Sen. John Loudon (R-Ballwin), would prohibit public agencies such as school districts, cities and counties from hiring contractors who have negotiated legally binding collective bargaining agreements – called Project Labor Agreements (PLA).

Sen. Green labeled the bill a direct attack on the middle class in Missouri, adding that the bill would have denied working Missourians the ability to earn a living wage—a family supporting wage.

"The middle class has taken hit after hit in under GOP majorities, and we refuse to shoulder any more of the burden while large corporations are handed one tax-supported perk after another." Sen. Green said.

By threatening to stall the legislative process, Sen. Green was able to keep SB 185 and SB 291, a detrimental prevailing wage bill, from coming to the Senate floor for a vote.

Sen. Green was also instrumental in creating a committee to study the flow of unlimited money to political campaigns.

When the state instituted campaign contribution limits to individual candidates, hundreds of "independent committees" sprang up, which collect unlimited amounts of money. Sen. Green took on the issue this session, pointing out the lack of transparency that can result from the use of independent committees.

"These independent committees hide true disclosure from the public," Sen. Green said. "When we placed caps on individual campaign contributions, we thought we were curtailing the amount of money, but we were just throwing gasoline onto a burning fire."

After Sen. Green debated the issue on the Senate floor, the GOP leadership agreed to have the Missouri Elections Commission conduct a study of third-party committees and the tracking of money into campaign funds.