



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Senate Gives First Round Approval to Legislation
Rewriting Missouri's Public School Funding Formula**

JEFFERSON CITY – The Missouri Senate gave first round approval late Tuesday to legislation rewriting the state's public school funding formula. Sen. Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, authored the new formula and said it varied greatly from the state's past formulas because funding is based on students' needs rather than local property tax assessments.

"This formula puts Missouri's children at the heart of the issue," Shields said. "The sole responsibility of a formula is to fund education equitably and adequately and basing it on the needs of the students is the best way to reach that paradigm."

The new formula, created in Senate Bill 287, begins with a school district's average daily attendance and then calculates additional credits for each student beyond the state average percentage enrolled in special programs within that district. Some of the student needs that are included in the calculation for extra credits include students that qualify for free or discount lunch programs, students enrolled in special education, and students with low English proficiency.

Once those credits are added to the average daily attendance of the district, that total is multiplied by the proposed state minimum spending amount per student which is \$6,117.

"The biggest problem with the current formula that we're trying to fix is there isn't a solid minimum amount being spent per student across the state," Shields said. "You have some districts spending only four thousand dollars per student while others are spending far more than that. This minimum fixes that."

The bill also introduces another new facet known as the dollar value modifier. It takes into consideration the cost of living in each school district and adjusts a district's total amount by how much education a dollar can buy in various parts of the state.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, offered an amendment that removed the cap from the dollar value modifier.

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“This change didn’t rob money from any district,” Gibbons said. “But it does allow districts where it costs more to educate a child to receive the appropriate funding needed to give those students the best education possible.”

Another amendment adopted by the body sets aside \$10 million in grants to be accessed by small districts that have less than 300 students in their average daily attendance. These smaller school districts can apply for portions of the grant money through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for services ranging from education to transportation.

Shields said it is estimated that it will cost the state more than \$685 million to fund the state’s portion of the new formula. The bill calls for the funding increases to be phased in over the course of the next five fiscal years, beginning July 1, 2006.

The measure must receive a final round of approval before moving to the House for similar consideration.

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