



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 13, 2005

Early Action Advances Priorities to the Governor
Missouri Senate Leads Historic Revolution

JEFFERSON CITY – Enacting measures making the lives of Missourians better in areas ranging from school, to work, to a day in court, the Missouri Senate adjourned Friday to end a successful 2005 legislative session. The Senate advanced to the governor a number of legislative priorities protecting children and taxpayers, including measures that rewrite the state’s school funding formula that distributes state money to public schools, reforming the workers’ compensation system to protect workers injured on the job, and revamping civil lawsuit procedures by capping irresponsibly large money awards that in turn will lower insurance premiums keeping doctors and access to quality healthcare in Missouri.

A total of more than 150 bills were truly agreed and finally passed by the General Assembly. Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, said voters elected larger Republican majorities in the legislature to see positive change.

“This legislative session is a significant and substantial victory for the people of Missouri,” Gibbons said. “They elected us in November because they wanted an end to the gridlock between the governor and legislature. That gridlock is over and we have delivered.”

The new foundation formula was one of the last major issues to be completed this session. Gibbons described the current school funding formula that distributes state tax dollars to elementary and secondary schools as broken. Senate Majority Floor Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, sponsored Senate Bill 287 which created a new formula.

“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 gives us the groundwork for adding money to a fair system.”

On top of rewriting the state’s school funding formula, the Senate also approved increased funding for elementary and secondary education by a total of \$170 million.

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Other priorities sent to the governor include Senate Bill 500 which reforms and saves the First Steps program guaranteeing 8,000 developmentally disabled children will continue to receive early intervention services at a savings to taxpayers.

The Senate also approved an incentive program (SB 343) for businesses to expand or relocate to Missouri by allowing them to invest a portion of their employee withholding taxes back into the company's growing payroll if the company offers fair wages and covers at least half the cost of their employees' healthcare benefits.

Gibbons says the swift work demonstrates a new philosophy adopted by the chamber.

"By working hard and acting early we have avoided having a train wreck of complex issues in the final days of session," Gibbons said. "We have debated the merits of every bill that has come before us and the people of Missouri are the winners."

Gibbons also noted the work ahead of the Senate in coming months. A number of interim committees have been created and charged with various issues to address. Those include the Medicaid Reform Commission and the Joint Committee on Tax Policy.

The Medicaid Reform Commission is charged with creating a new healthcare system for the state of Missouri to replace the current Medicaid system. The new system would protect the state's most vulnerable people and better serve recipients, providers and taxpayers.

The Joint Committee on Tax Policy will review the state's current tax structure written in the early 20th century and examine if it meets the needs of the state's 21st century economy.

The legislature will next return for the annual veto session held in September.

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