



*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

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**Bill Rewriting Missouri's Public School
Funding Formula Signed into Law**

JEFFERSON CITY – A new funding formula that distributes state money to public schools based on students' needs rather than local wealth was signed into law today. Senate Majority Floor Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, authored the bill and noted the measure's focus of basing funding 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 gives us the groundwork for adding money to a fair system."

The new formula 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 new state minimum spending amount per student which is \$6,117.

The measure also includes a Dollar Value Modifier, which 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 regions of the state. The Modifier, the first of its kind, balances the needs of both urban and rural school districts. There is no cap on the amount the Dollar Value Modifier can add to a district's total funding.

The formula also sets aside \$15 million for school districts that have less than 350 students in their average daily attendance. These traditionally rural, smaller school districts can use these funds for purposes such as distance learning, extraordinary transportation costs and rural teacher recruitment.

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Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, expressed the importance of fixing the state's school funding formula from the onset of this year's legislative session.

"It was imperative that we put in place a new formula this year because it was clear the old system was broken," Gibbons said. "I commend Sen. Shields for his leadership in working to find the right balance so that all of our children, no matter their public school district, now have an equal opportunity for a great education."

Shields echoed the importance of the legislature successfully passing a new formula this year rather than leaving it to the courts to decide in reference to a pending lawsuit questioning the adequacy of the current formula.

"Parents, teachers, and superintendents have all had input in shaping the new formula through their elected officials," Shields said. "We are reactive to our constituency unlike the court judges who are not elected."

Shields said it is estimated that it will cost the state approximately \$800 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 seven fiscal years, beginning in 2007.

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