

*“Nothing is politically right
which is morally wrong.”*
– Daniel O’Connell



*“Free and fair discussion will ever be
found the firmest friend of truth.”*
– George Campbell

MISSOURI SENATE

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Senator Bill Stouffer on SB 287 **Senate Approves New School Formula**

While many would agree the state’s foundation formula would be adequate if fully funded, it is rarely described as sustainable. Our current formula is a fast-growing budget buster, like Medicaid, and needs to be fixed before the courts decide what is best for schools.

The legislature’s mission is to improve the equality between schools spending almost \$10,000 less per student than others. The new foundation formula is an example of a political compromise to do what is best for students.

While creating this new formula, performance schools were identified. Using this information, it was determined schools could effectively educate students at an artificial target of \$6,117 per pupil. For example, schools under this target would receive additional funds to meet this goal. Schools that are already spending more per pupil because of outstanding local effort will not receive additional funding.

During this process both rural and urban superintendents made it known they no longer wanted a tax-driven levy. The new proposal moves education funding from a tax-driven formula to a student-needs based formula. It has been projected that schools with high local taxes will not receive any additional state funding, because they already meet the target spending of \$6,117 per pupil.

Many compromises were made to make both urban and rural schools happy. The urban areas wanted the state of Missouri to change assessments practices. Two dollar-modifiers were added to reflect higher costs of living in urban areas. For example, a dollar in Macon, Higginsville, or Fayette equals a \$1.15 in St. Louis. I do not agree with this practice. A \$10 million grant program for small schools has also been added. This will help pay for small district-specific needs such as transportation, distance learning, etc.

My number one concern when looking into any formula is forced consolidation. We have students riding busses for long periods of time. After speaking with my colleagues and looking at the formula, I do not believe this formula will create forced consolidation.

This formula needs some work, but it is a step in the right direction. It will take time to figure out the most equal way to spend the money. Therefore, this formula has a stipulation that every three years the per-pupil target will be modified. By having this stipulation, schools not receiving additional funding this time could receive additional funding in a few years.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue please feel free to call toll free 866-768-3987 or email bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.