

*"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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State and Federal Officials Work to Relieve Drought Devastation

It is no secret that Missourians have witnessed in the summer of 2005 one of the worst droughts since 1984. Cities have issued water restrictions, ponds and creeks have begun to dry, and traffic on our rivers has been reduced. However, those Missourians who must withstand the most immediate and prolonged effects of severe drought are, without question, our farmers and ranchers.

The drought of 2005, which continues to this day, has left Missouri with thousands of acres of underdeveloped and irreparably damaged crops. Corn production will be down an estimated 50 to 70 percent this year, and our soybean losses will reach at least 40 percent. Winter hay reserves are being consumed rapidly, in place of desolate pastures, as feed for our livestock. Meanwhile, fuel and fertilizer costs have skyrocketed.

However, I am not here to go on about the extent of this year's drought. You have witnessed the damage firsthand. But I would like to comment about what state and federal officials are doing to ease the burden on Missouri farm families.

The Missouri Farm Service Agency is currently conducting a drought assessment of 106 Missouri counties to determine the need for federal relief funds. Federal disaster-relief funds can be offered in the form of emergency loans, income tax relief and other methods of assistance.

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While these direct forms of economic assistance will help, Missourians are also working together to beat the hot, dry weather. The executive director of the Missouri Dairy Association has called on the Farm Service Agency to provide assistance to crop farmers so they can sell damaged corn to dairy farmers to feed their cows. Dale Ludwig, the head of the Missouri Soybean Association, has pointed to the resilience of soybeans as hope for a recovering crop. However, Ludwig did cite the need for at least some rain to help the harvest. And that is where we need to direct our hope and prayers to really make it through the summer.

If you have stories of the extent of this drought, please call or e-mail our office so we can share these with the state and federal decision-makers that are considering its extent.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other matter, or would like to receive these weekly reports electronically, please call our office toll free at (866) 768-3987 or e-mail bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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