



MISSOURI SENATE

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Celebrating Achievement, Looking to Future Success

Senators move several bills, look forward to further accomplishment

JEFFERSON CITY – As we enter our mid-session recess, my colleagues and I in the Missouri Senate have advanced 93 measures to improve the lives of Missourians. However, we are determined to continue moving forward in the session’s remaining weeks.

Legislation eliminating excessive jury awards has passed the General Assembly and reached Gov. Matt Blunt’s desk. House Bill 393 will improve Missouri’s civil liability system and make it a more fair environment for state doctors and businesses. The bill lowers caps on jury awards for non-economic damages and reforms the “joint and several liability” provision, which can require some defendants to pay more than their determined liability. The legislation also prevents “venue shopping,” where trials are allowed to be moved to jurisdictions that give the highest awards. These reductions in outrageous jury awards will create a system that is no longer unfair for Missouri businesses and doctors.

My colleagues and I have also worked to eliminate corruption in workers’ compensation claims. The General Assembly has delivered to the governor legislation reducing awards to workers who are injured while violating safety standards. Senate Bill 1 also places the burden of proof on employees, a measure that will further reduce illegitimate claims. These reforms will bring in more business to Missouri by getting rid of a system susceptible to fraudulent workers’ compensation claims.

The Senate has also passed legislation to reduce methamphetamine production. Senate Bill 10 limits the amount of over-the-counter cold medications containing pseudoephedrine that customers can buy. It also requires pharmacists or licensed technicians to distribute these medications. With meth plaguing our state, my colleagues and I have acted to stem the flow of chemicals available to manufacturers. With cooperation from the House, we can work to defeat this affliction.

While the Senate has worked tirelessly to move these and other measures ahead, we still have work to do. Several measures requiring action remain.

The Senate has yet to approve legislation improving funding for state schools. Senate Bill 287 will fund Missouri schools more equitably and ensure that our children receive the education they deserve. Our current formula, the infamous “foundation formula,” is outdated and in dire need of repair. In fact, nearly half of our public schools have filed a lawsuit charging that the funding system is unfair. However, this legislation will ensure that our school funding program accounts for the fact that education costs and the ability to raise funds varies from district to district. The bill determines a minimum per-pupil dollar amount needed to provide an adequate education and adjusts that figure for each district. As a result, the buying power of Missouri districts will be on a level playing field. This fair and legally defensible system will replace a formula that has fallen out of relevancy.

A bill I am sponsoring would relieve an undue burden on local law enforcement agencies. Senate Bill 496 would eliminate prison guard training standards from local jailers. Local and county governments do not have the resources to apply the stringent certification process of prison guards to their jailers. Further, the differences in the rights and privileges of inmates in local jails and those in state prisons make the uniform guidelines impractical. Sheriff’s department officials throughout the state have showed their support for my bill, which allows local governments to function more efficiently for the tax dollars available to them. I look forward to Senate approval of my bill.

Looking ahead to the coming weeks, I am confident my colleagues and I will be able to enact these and other needed bills. Our work will further the effort to continue the great traditions of our state.

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Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.