



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# Getting Back to Work

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### *Senators return to the Capitol to address schools, crime and health care*

JEFFERSON CITY – As my colleagues and I in the Missouri General Assembly return to our chambers at the State Capitol after our spring recess, we turn our attention once again to education, crime and health care. Meanwhile, we can pause to celebrate our successes in civil liability reform.

As a member of the Senate Education Committee and the Joint Committee on Education, the issues facing our students, teachers and administrators are of utmost importance to me. We are now on the brink of reforming Missouri's formula for distributing education funds. Senate Bill 287, which needs Education Committee approval before it heads to debate on the Senate floor, will fund Missouri schools more equitably and ensure that schools receive adequate funding to educate our children.

Our "foundation formula" needs to be brought into line with our state's current education environment. Nearly half of all Missouri schools have charged that the current funding system is unfair. Senate Bill 287 organizes the system to account for the varying costs of living district by district. This bill will provide a more equitable system in order to give all of our students an equal chance at a quality education.

As we work to better provide for Missouri students, we are also directing our efforts to reduce the plague of methamphetamine production in our communities. I am co-sponsoring legislation to limit the amount of over-the-counter cold medicine containing pseudoephedrine customers can buy. Senate Bill 10, which has passed the Senate and needs House approval to be sent to the governor, also requires pharmacists or licensed technicians to distribute these medications, which can be used to produce meth.

This bill will help stem the growth of a tragic epidemic that threatens the safety and values of Missouri's citizens.

Meanwhile, senators are preparing to vote on a bill to close the Medicare prescription drug coverage gap for seniors. Senate Bill 75 will ensure that no seniors are left behind when it comes to health care coverage. Currently, deserving seniors are not receiving Medicare prescription drug benefits because of the "doughnut hole" created by the national Medicare Act of 2003. This legislation will bring in line the Missouri Senior Rx program and the federal Medicare system.

As we look ahead to these efforts, we can also pause to reflect on the success of another one of this year's top priorities. Just this week, Gov. Matt Blunt signed into law important legislation reforming our civil liability system.

House Bill 393, which the governor signed Tuesday, will make our civil liability system fairer for Missouri businesses and healthier for the state in general. Under the bill, Missouri will no longer allow "venue shopping," a process where trials are moved to districts that give the highest jury awards. It also prevents excessive jury awards by lowering caps on jury awards for punitive damages and reforms the state's "joint and several liability" law, which can require some defendants to pay more than their determined liability. These reforms will change practices that have driven away some of our state's best doctors and damaged our business environment through high malpractice awards and insurance rates.

The successes of the Missouri Senate, those in the past and in the future, will make our state a better place for our schools, our families and our communities. I encourage all of my constituents to join the fight for a better Missouri.

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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.*