



MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week
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A Healthy State of Mind

Legislation in the Senate provides better health coverage, arms the battle against cancer, and protects the well being of our communities

JEFFERSON CITY – With the budget due this week, state senators are working overtime to pass a fiscal plan that provides a fair deal for all Missourians. The budget, due May 6, is spelled out in 13 bills being finalized by members of both parties in conference committee. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I spent a great deal of time debating the budget and I urge members of the conference committee to pass the version approved by the Senate.

The Appropriations Committee has agreed on a budget that finds a balance between two of the major concerns of the current session: education and health care. While maintaining our commitment to increasing funding for public schools, my colleagues and I have returned approximately 30,000 Missourians to Medicaid. We have delivered a budget that allows more Missourians to be eligible for Medicaid and increases funding for Missouri schools by \$113 million. Our budget proposal also provides funding increases for the Departments of Agriculture, Conservation, Public Safety and Transportation. This budget provides for the Missourians most in need of assistance: our children, who need an adequate education, and elderly Missourians, who often need a helping hand when it comes to health care.

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While we have maintained our commitment to educating our youth while extending health care benefits, other health-related measures are advancing in the General Assembly. Senate Bill 365, which I am co-sponsoring, helps protect Missourians against cancer by requiring health insurers to cover patient costs for clinical trials for cancer treatment. This legislation allows for a two-pronged approach against cancer. It supports research of cancer treatment while allowing cancer patients to receive treatment through clinical trials. This measure will help ensure that Missourians who have cancer, now and in the future, receive the best treatment available to them.

But Missouri's fight against cancer must not stop there. We must work on all fronts to minimize the threat of cancer. That is why I have sponsored Senate Concurrent Resolution 5, which supports the Department of Health and Senior Services and the Missouri Cancer Consortium in developing the Comprehensive Cancer Action Plan. The plan will contain a review of data regarding cervical cancer prevention and cancer control strategies to be presented each year to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, President Pro Tem of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The cancer control agenda would also be posted on the Missouri state Web site. By educating Missourians about the dangers of cancer, we can work to control and defeat this disease.

While we work to maintain the health of our citizens, the General Assembly has also passed legislation to allow for healthier communities. Senate Bill 10, which I am co-sponsoring, limits access to chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine. The legislation limits the amount of some over-the-counter cold remedies customers can purchase and requires pharmacists or licensed technicians to distribute those medications. Only medicines containing pseudoephedrine in tablet form are affected; liquid and gel-cap versions, which cannot be used for meth production, are exempt. By limiting the access of meth manufacturers to these chemicals, we can work to counter an affliction that has gripped communities throughout Missouri.

These measures will provide better health coverage for the elderly, a continued fight against cancer, and safeguards against the growth of methamphetamine addiction. Together, they will make for a healthier, 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.*