



MISSOURI SENATE

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Advancing Legislation to Help Missouri Children

Bills on the governor's desk will help Missouri's greatest resource

JEFFERSON CITY – With the 2005 legislative session more than a month behind us, several key pieces of legislation that passed the General Assembly remain on the governor's desk for final approval. I am sure these important measures will be signed by the governor because they represent an investment in our children, the future of Missouri.

Senate Bill 287 will change Missouri's education funding formula from a system based on local tax rates to one based on student need. This legislation will fund Missouri school districts more equitably and guarantee that our schools will spend enough on students to provide them an adequate education. It will provide an additional \$830 million each year for Missouri schools and ensure that every student gets a chance for a first-rate education.

As a member of the Senate Education Committee and the Joint Committee on Education, I have seen this bill develop and move through the General Assembly. The benefits it will provide for Missouri schools are worth all the effort that went into getting this bill passed, and I know the governor will sign the new system into law.

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Legislation I have co-sponsored that will reduce Missouri's methamphetamine plague also awaits final approval. Senate Bill 10 requires over-the-counter cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine to be distributed by pharmacists or licensed technicians. The legislation applies to medicines such as Sudafed and Actifed, which are used to make the deadly drug. Only medications in pill form, not syrups or gel-caplets, are affected by the bill. By making it more difficult for criminals to purchase the chemicals used to make meth, we can help get these drugs off the streets and out of Missouri homes. In doing so, we can protect our children from an affliction that plagues our communities.

Senate Bill 420, which I sponsored, contains a variety of provisions relating to the safety of our children and other legal concerns. Under the legislation, courts will not be permitted to return children to homes in which the parents have been convicted of certain sexual offenses against children. This provision ensures that our children will not be reunited with the very people who have abused them or other children and sent them into the custody of the state. Another measure allows courts to appoint standby guardians who temporarily assume the duties of a legal guardian. The bill also creates a task force that will draft a plan for alternative prison sentences for nonviolent offenders in order to slow the growth of our overburdened state prisons. These measures will make our children safer while creating a better-functioning legal system in Missouri.

The 2005 legislative session produced many important pieces of legislation, and our children will be among those who benefit the most. My colleagues and I in the Missouri General Assembly have fulfilled our promise to provide for the health, safety and education of Missouri's greatest resource. I thank all of my constituents for their support, and I vow to continue my efforts to help all Missouri families.

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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.