



# **Missouri's First Steps Program**

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*Sponsoring Legislation to Reform and Save the First Steps Program*

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## **First Steps Program**

In an effort to prevent more than 8,000 developmentally disabled Missouri infants and toddlers from losing access to Missouri's First Steps program, I cosponsored legislation this week to reform the program. The First Steps program is designed for children, birth to age 3, who have delayed development or diagnosed conditions that are associated with developmental disabilities. Through examination of this program, we found that we can serve these children, while also making it cost effective for the taxpayer. Currently, the First Steps program has no income cap, meaning all participants are covered at the state's expense. The proposed legislation introduces a fee for First Steps based on a family's income and size. Families enrolled in Medicaid will not be charged the fee, but families who do have other means, such as medical insurance, will now be asked to rely on those resources as well. The legislation mandates private health insurance companies provide coverage for early intervention services such as First Steps. The legislation is a cost effective means to ensure that families still receive the necessary support, services, and resources they need to raise a healthy and happy child.

## **Workers' Compensation**

The House this week passed a Senate measure revising the state's workers' compensation system. Among several provisions, Senate Bill 1 allows compensation only if a workplace accident was the prevailing factor (rather than the current "substantial" factor) in causing the condition. An additional reform states that those who are injured while legally drunk on the job will receive no compensation unless they can prove that alcohol did not play a role in the injury. The House added a number of provisions to the original bill, including the establishment of term limits for judges deciding workers' compensation cases. Since both chambers must agree on identical language before a bill can become law, delegates from the House and Senate will meet next week to resolve the differences. The bill will now head to conference where designated senators and representatives will work out a compromise

between the senate and house versions then to be presented to the respective chambers for final passage. I will serve as a conferee on this important legislation and am honored to be selected to serve in such an important role where I can advocate true workers compensation reform.

## **Tort Reform**

Also this week, the Senate's Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee heard a House bill revising the State's tort environment. House Bill 393 places caps on how much juries can award plaintiffs for non-economic damages, the amount included for "pain and suffering", in certain tort actions. It also prohibits moving trials from where alleged harm occurred to jurisdictions known for issuing higher-than-average awards. The bill will be voted on by the committee next Monday and is expected to be heard on the Senate floor next week. I am a strong advocate of tort reform in the Senate. These reforms will help every Missourian struggling to find affordable health insurance.

## **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: [jcrowell@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jcrowell@senate.mo.gov) or visit me on the web at <http://www.jasoncrowell.com>.

Thank you for your time.

*Senator Jason Crowell represents the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry and Scott counties in the Missouri Senate.*