



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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SMSU Name Change Approved

JEFFERSON CITY – Southwest Missouri State University in Springfield is a step closer to becoming Missouri State University. Following an all-night debate Monday, members of the Missouri Senate approved Senate Bill 98 by a 23-7 vote. A final Senate vote of 25-7 in favor of the measure now sends the name change proposal to the House.

SMSU has been seeking this change since the 1980s. The university wants to drop its regional designation to better reflect its statewide mission.

I have been a strong supporter of this measure, which is sponsored by Sen. Norma Champion, R-Springfield. By dropping the regional designation, Missouri State University will be able to recruit more students and grants from out-of-state.

The most vocal opponents of SB 98 argued the name change would diminish the stature of our state's flagship campus and possibly divert state dollars from MU to MSU. Opponents staged a 14-hour filibuster in an effort to derail the legislation.

Fortunately, a compromise was reached when Senators called University of Missouri President Elson Floyd and SMSU President John Keiser during floor debate. President Keiser agreed to certain academic restrictions, and in turn, President Floyd asked that the filibuster be halted.

Senate Bill 98 maintains the University of Missouri system will continue to be the primary research university and defines the doctoral degree programs the newly renamed Missouri State University would be able to offer students.

Southwest Missouri State University has a statewide board of governors, a statewide public affairs mission, and has expanded the number of graduate degree programs offered to students. The only thing lacking was a name to reflect the university's statewide mission.

SB 98 also changes the name of Missouri Western State College in St. Joseph to Missouri Western State University, Harris-Stowe State College in St. Louis to Harris-Stowe State University, and drops the city designation from Missouri Southern State University-Joplin.. An amendment adopted during floor debate also would allow a majority of the board of governors of Central Missouri State University to change that institution's name to the University of Central Missouri within the next two years.

The measure now moves to the House for consideration.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.