



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Session Ends, Important Issues Remain

JEFFERSON CITY – With the conclusion of the First Regular Session of the 93rd Missouri General Assembly, legislators have returned to their homes, their families and their businesses. Although the session has ended, important legislative work will continue through the summer and fall as we prepare for the Second Regular Session, which begins in January.

For example, while legislators took important steps this session to rein in the growth of Missouri's Medicaid system, Senate Bill 539 creates a Medicaid Reform Commission to study and review the current Medicaid system and make recommendations for reforms. The commission will consist of six members from the House, six members from the Senate, and the directors of the Departments of Social Services, Health and Senior Services and Mental Health. Commission members will make recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1, 2006, on reforming, redesigning and restructuring a new, innovative Medicaid system to replace the current state system.

A bill that would have helped reduce the number of abortions performed in Missouri did not make it through the General Assembly in the final week. Senate Bill 2 would have allowed lawsuits to be filed against people who help minors cross state lines to receive abortions, require abortion clinics to have health care privileges at hospitals within 30 miles of clinics, prohibit abortion providers from receiving state funding, and remove requirements that school courses on human sexuality provide information about contraception. On the final day of the legislative session, Governor Blunt mentioned the possibility of calling a special session in September, coinciding with the annual veto session, to address this important legislation.

A bill changing Missouri's underage-drinking laws did receive approval by the General Assembly this session. Senate Bill 402 requires individuals under 21 who are convicted of alcohol possession to lose their driver's licenses for 90 days. Minors under 16 convicted of the same crime must wait until they are 18 to receive their driver's licenses. Also under the bill, Missouri's "minor in possession" charge may be applied to minors who are visibly drunk or who have a blood-alcohol content higher than 0.02, not just those holding alcoholic beverages.

The bill also contains provisions applying to parents, schools and those manufacturing or selling false identification cards. Parents allowing minors other than their own children to drink on their property would be subject to a Class B misdemeanor. Missouri schools are also required to develop policies detailing disciplinary measures to be used for students found drinking on or off school property or while representing the school during extracurricular activities. The bill also makes it a Class A misdemeanor for individuals to manufacture and sell fake IDs to minors for the purpose of buying alcohol.

Reforms to Missouri involuntary manslaughter laws also were approved by the General Assembly. Senate Bill 37 increases penalties against drunk drivers who cause the death of others. It also stiffens consequences for repeat offenders.

I will continue to write about issues of interest to the citizens of the 28th Senatorial District on a weekly basis during the summer and fall.

If you have questions or comments about these or other issues, 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.