



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# Reforming Medicaid

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JEFFERSON CITY – While legislators took important steps this session to rein in the growth of Missouri's Medicaid system, Senate Bill 539 created a Medicaid Reform Commission to study and review the current Medicaid system and make recommendations for reforms. The commission, which held its first meetings this week in Jefferson City, consists of five members from the House, five 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.

Missouri's Medicaid program had been growing at a rate of 50,000 new people each year, costing an additional \$250 million a year. The state had been spending more on Medicaid than on elementary/secondary education. If legislators simply had enacted Governor Blunt's proposed cuts without reforming the system, we would have been back at this same level in three years, and in four years would have been an additional billion dollars in the red.

The skyrocketing load on the Missouri budget was not sustainable. In 1968 when Medicaid began, it accounted for less than four percent of the budget. Today Medicaid accounts for about one-fourth of the state budget. But the reforms approved this session are just the beginning of the process to rein in a program that has far exceeded its original mission.

For too long, Missouri measured compassion by the number of people bound to the state's Medicaid rolls. Instead, it should be measured by the quality and access we offer to the truly needy.

The Medicaid Reform Commission will hold public hearings across the state to find new ways to help those who truly need assistance. Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons challenged members this week to “wipe the slate clean on what we know about Medicaid” in order to “do the right thing by the most vulnerable people.”

Sorting through true needs and protecting Missouri's assets from blatant abuse can be a tough balance. But proceeding on our current course will guarantee the collapse of the system and leave truly needy recipients of Medicaid without a proper safety net of service.

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](mailto: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.*