



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# Sheltered Workshops

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JEFFERSON CITY – During the 2005 legislative session I sponsored a bill which would have increased the amount of state support to sheltered workshops. Although this legislation received approval in the Senate and was ready to be debated in the House, time ran out in the session and a final vote was not taken. I am confident my colleagues will again support this important legislation during the 2006 session.

Sheltered workshops are non-profit small businesses employing people who are deemed to be unable to work in a competitive work environment due to mental retardation, head injuries, blindness, deafness and other physical or mental disabilities. Some of the tasks that disabled people are contracted to perform include packaging and assembling products, sorting and stuffing mail, janitorial duties and grounds maintenance. Workshop employees are paid based on their ability to perform in relation to the performance of a person without a disability. Workers must be certified by the Department of Education as to their disability level and workshops are audited by the Department of Labor.

As with many businesses, operating costs are high. However, for Missouri's sheltered workshops, the strain of these costs is even more cumbersome, because unlike those in many other states, they operate by mostly relying on contracted work and the revenue that work generates. Increased supervision also is needed, which adds to the overhead costs. Many sheltered workshops receive local tax support through SB40 Boards.

As of now, workshops are reimbursed at a rate of \$13, multiplied by the number of 6-hour or longer days worked by disabled workers.

The bill I will introduce increases the reimbursements each year, so that by July of 2009, workshops will be receiving up to \$18 for every 6-hour or longer day worked by its disabled employees, subject to appropriation.

Missouri's 93 well-run sheltered workshops, which employ nearly 8,000 disabled people and close to 900 non-disabled individuals, greatly contribute to the state's commerce and to communities' well-being. My bill would help ensure the positive effects of sheltered workshops will continue. The disabled staff members are by and large happy and upbeat while they work, and their jobs give them added reasons to get up everyday. They are proud of being wage earners—something that gives them hope, self-assurance and self-satisfaction because they are actively contributing to the economy of Missouri.

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.*