

2006 Legislative Report



Dear Neighbor,

The 2006 legislative session was one of challenges and opportunities. One big difference from recent years is that rising state revenue over the past year helped make the budget process somewhat smoother this session and prevented further cuts to essential services. Regarding action on legislation, sharp ideological differences among lawmakers made debate interesting and lively, but often led to frustrating results.

Legislation passed during this year's session dealt with changes to eminent domain, requirements for "pathways to safety" in assisted-living facilities, protections for children from sexual predators, decentralization of vehicle-emissions testing, oversight of medical malpractice insurance and clinical trials for cancer patients.

On the other hand, some important pieces of legislation did not pass; among these were restoring the health-care program for working people with disabilities, making the complaint process for excessive utility rates fairer for consumers, changing the definition of "blight" for tax increment financing, creating a "no-call" list for faxes and cell phones and establishing a renewable-energy standard for Missouri utilities.

The following pages expand on some of the highlights from this year. Please do not hesitate to call me about any of the issues I've outlined here or any other legislative matter of interest to you. You'll find my contact information below, as well as on page 12.

Much work has yet to be done to ensure that Missourians are served well by their state government. I am already forming my legislative agenda for the session in 2007. Meanwhile, my service to you in the 24th District continues throughout the year. It is a pleasure and a privilege to represent you in the Missouri Senate.

Sincerely,

State Senator Joan Bray

201 W. Capitol, State Capitol, Room 434, Jefferson City, MO 65101
(573) 751-2514 - www.senate.mo.gov/bray

Senator Bray's Committees

Senate Committees

- Appropriations
- Commerce, Energy and the Environment
- Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics
- Transportation
- Ways and Means

Senate-House Joint Legislative Committees

- Joint Committee on Administrative Rules
- Joint Committee on Tax Policy
- Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight

Senate Interim Committees

- Senate Interim Committee on 21st Century Choice in Technology
- Senate Interim Committee on the Missouri State Public Defender System

Missouri's FY 2007 Budget at a Glance

As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee for the past four years, Senator Bray has fought to fund the needs of families, seniors and people with disabilities. After years of devastating cuts, Senator Bray appreciates that the state's economy was stable enough that drastic cuts were no longer required. State employees, except for elected officials and judges, received a 4 percent cost-of-living increase. Low-income families will receive about \$6.1 million in utility assistance, and seniors will benefit from \$1 million for more home-delivered meals. Veterans saw \$5.4 million more to operate veterans' homes and add more staffing.

Medicaid, an area of great contention that was cut severely last year, received an increase of more than \$200 million, with the expansion of optional services and an increase in the rate paid to service providers for the elderly, disabled and children in state custody. However, virtually none of the 134,000 people cut from Medicaid the previous year saw their health-care services restored.

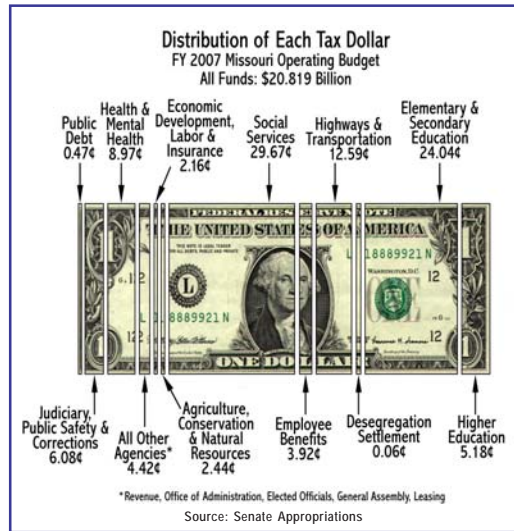
Senator Bray remains concerned about funding for the Missouri Department of Mental Health. Over the past five years, the department has received an average state funding increase of 1.4 percent, with drastic cuts

of up to 7 percent in the 2003 fiscal year and another 3 percent cut in 2004 fiscal year. The recent deaths of two constituents in the Northwest Habilitation Center sounded an alarm. The center illustrates the systemic problem in which overworked, underpaid staff function in circumstances that breed a climate for inadequate

care and abuse. The state's most basic and sacred duty is the protection of the weakest among us, according to Senator Bray. She is particularly distressed that the Legislature did not appropriate the minimum amount the department requested to begin correcting the problems at habilitation centers across the state.

This year, Senator Bray not only fought for the additional funding, but also called on Governor Blunt to create a task force to investigate and address incidents of abuse and neglect and

client deaths at Department of Mental Health facilities and community-based agencies. The governor created the Missouri Mental Health Task Force, which is made up of representatives from the departments of Mental Health (DMH), Public Safety, Health and Senior Services, and Social Services. The lieutenant governor and interim director for the DMH serve as co-chairs of the task force.



Homestead Preservation Credit - Helping Missouri's Seniors and Disabled

The Homestead Preservation Credit gives qualified senior citizens and 100 percent disabled individuals a credit on their real estate property taxes, if those taxes increase 2.5 percent in a non-reassessment year or 5 percent in a reassessment year. The act requires a legislative appropriation to fund this brand new tax-credit program. The Legislature chose to fully fund the program this year.

The Homestead Preservation Credit is available to individuals who are 65 or older, married couples if one spouse is 65 or older and the other spouse is at least 60, and individuals with a 100 percent disability. An individual's or family's adjusted gross income must be \$72,380 or less to qualify. The application and required attachments must be postmarked by Oct. 16, 2006.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF REVENUE
FORM HPC (REV. 7-2006)
2006 APPLICATION FOR HOMESTEAD PRESERVATION CREDIT

APPLICATION MUST BE POSTMARKED BETWEEN APRIL 1 AND OCTOBER 16, 2006

1. Are you 65 years of age or older (if married, spouse is at least 60 years of age or older) on or before January 1, 2006?
 YES NO

2. Are you 100% Disabled (as a result of military service - attach a copy of the letter from Department of Veterans Affairs) or 100% Disabled (attach a copy of the letter from Social Security Administration or Form SSA-1099)?
 YES NO

3. If during your eligibility you are being disabled, verification of disability is required. Attach a copy of approved form of documentation (see instructions). FAILURE TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION WILL RESULT IN CREDIT BEING DENIED.

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Protecting Private Property Rights

Reining in Government Condemnation Powers

Lawmakers passed legislation this year in an attempt to protect homeowners, farmers and small businesses from local governments abusing the power of eminent domain.

The legislation, House Bill 1944, tightens requirements for when eminent domain can be used, but fails to provide the protections many property owners and organized citizens were seeking. The law does increase the ability of people whose property is taken to receive fairer compensation for their property. It provides an extra 25 percent over fair market value for property taken by eminent domain and requires up to 50 percent over fair market value if the property has been owned for more than 50 years.

Senator Bray offered numerous amendments to address the issue of just compensation and improve the process for people who fall victim to eminent domain. However, the Legislature failed to adopt most of her amendments.

Recognizing that no other bills were filed that properly limited the use of eminent domain or addressed actual just compensation, Senator Bray filed her own bill, Senate Bill 1171. Her bill would have barred a condemning entity from using eminent domain to take private property when the use of the property would result in any sort of profit for another private owner. The bill that passed only prohibits the use of eminent domain “solely” for economic development reasons.

The new law also claims to address fair and just compensation. But it fails to consider market alternatives or replacement costs, such as reasonable relocation expenses, the expense of replicating the owner’s personal property that cannot be relocated, the amount of direct losses of tangible property incurred by the owner as a result of relocating or discontinuing a business or farm, reasonable



In 2005, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Kelo v. City of New London* that governments can legally seize the homes and businesses of private citizens and give the condemned land to private developers.

expenses incurred by the owner in searching for a replacement business or farm, reasonable expenses of the owner to re-establish the displaced business or farm, or reasonable attorney’s fees, expert fees and appraisal fees.

House Bill 1944 also fails to allow for condemnation commissioners, the court or a jury to use income as a measure when determining the assessed damages to a property owner for a partial taking. Furthermore, the legislation fails to address the practice of “bundling,” where several homes or businesses are taken to create one large piece of real estate. The total worth of the resulting property is often much more than the value of the individual parcels.

Finally, the legislation fails to take into consideration the all-too-common circumstance where residents are not compensated properly to afford comparable real estate within the same school district.

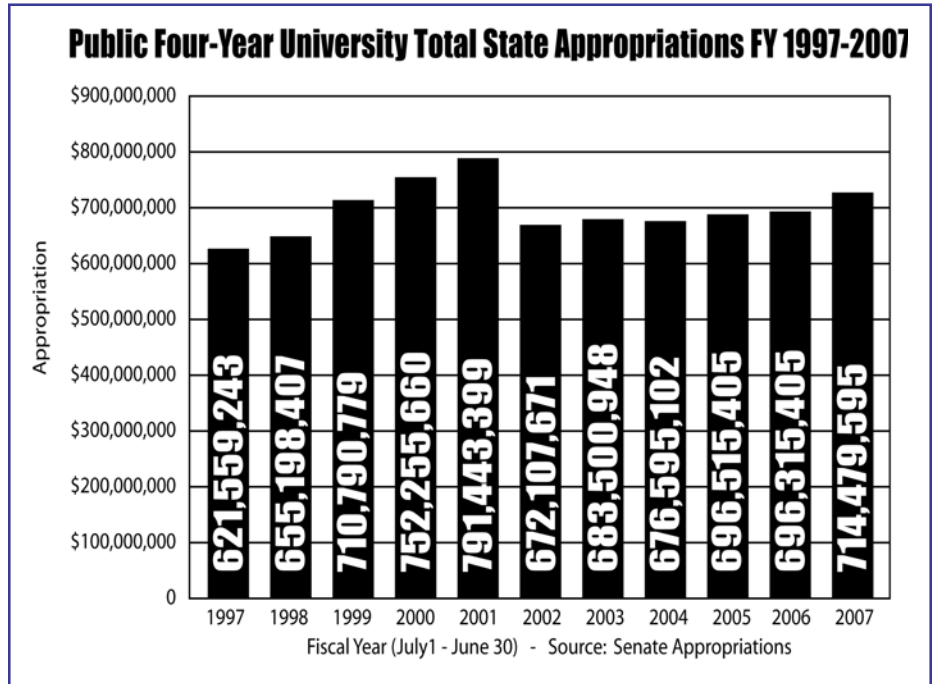
Education Funding In Missouri

The Missouri House and Senate passed appropriations bills that increase funding for K-12 education and provide the first major increase to higher education in several years.

Senator Bray was successful in getting an extra increase of \$2 million for the University of Missouri - St. Louis. The increase is an effort to address the perpetual underfunding of the University of Missouri - St. Louis and the disparity of funding within the University of Missouri system.

Missouri's K-12 public schools will receive a 4.6 percent increase in funding for a total of \$3.94 billion compared to last year's \$3.77 billion. The increases are broken down into an additional \$127.9 million for the school funding formula, \$15 million for the Small Schools Grant Program, \$6 million in new funding for costs incurred by school districts to educate severely disabled children, a \$1 million increase for expansion of Missouri's nationally recognized Parents as

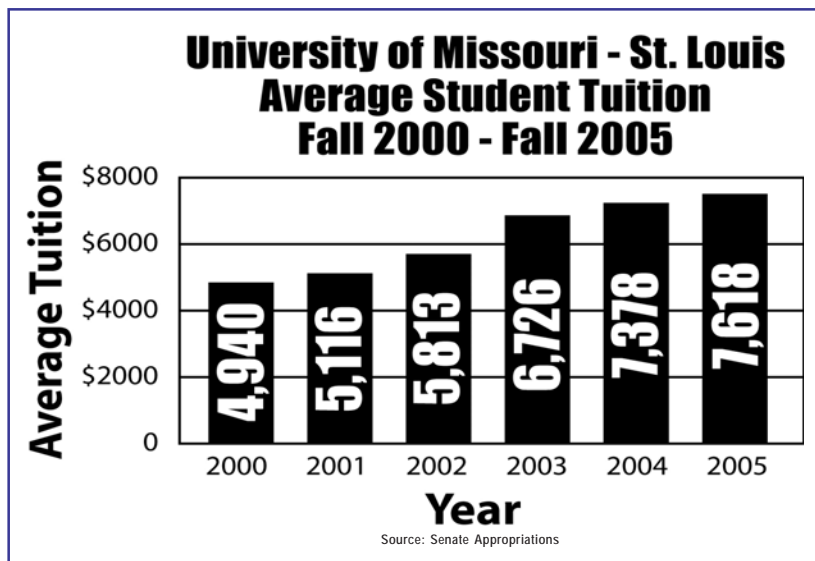
Teachers program, and an additional \$1.8 million for A+ Schools. The state contributes almost \$880 million in general revenue to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's total budget of \$5.02 billion.



Over the past 25 years, a student's share of the cost of a college education has risen from 25 percent to more than 50 percent. Missouri ranks second in the nation for tuition hikes over the past five years. For the first time, the state provides a minority share of the contribution toward the higher-education needs of its residents.

Senator Bray has advocated for increased funding and financial aid to students because she fears many students will be priced out of higher education. As college costs increase at twice the rate of inflation, tuition and fee increases become much harder to afford. Approximately 80,000

Missouri students and their families have been forced to swallow an average tuition increase of \$1,700 a year.



The median student loan debt in the United States is \$16,500, but for students attending Missouri's state universities, it amounts to \$17,000, a 74 percent increase in indebtedness since 1997.

Senator Bray recognizes that without an educated workforce, Missouri will be unable to compete in the marketplace. Most employers and corporations cite the level

of a state's contribution toward education as an important factor when considering relocation or expansion. Greater investment in the state's students and post-secondary education makes sound economic sense.

Donating Blood – Giving the Gift of Life

The General Assembly responded to Missouri's blood donor shortage by passing Senate Bill 1197, which allows 16-year-olds to donate blood with parental permission.

According to the American Red Cross, every two seconds someone in the United States needs blood. A single donation saves at least three lives. More than eight million Americans take time to give blood, and now, thanks to the passage of this legislation, more Missourians can give the gift of life.

Call 1-800-GIVELIFE or visit www.givelife.org to find a donation location near you.

More On Education Funding

MOHELA, the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority, made headlines this past spring when word got out about Governor Blunt's plan to sell the state's quasi-governmental student loan agency and use the profits for other purposes.

With the word that MOHELA would be gobbled up by the nationwide corporate student lender, "Sallie Mae," Senator Bray and others concerned about the steeply escalating cost of attending college sounded alarms about the effect the sale would have on Missouri students.

MOHELA is a secondary market for low-interest student loans, meaning students get loans from banks and MOHELA then pays the banks for the loans. The banks use that money from the sale to approve more loans for students.

But MOHELA has become more than a behind-the-scenes loan purchaser. It has developed loan-forgiveness programs, reduced interest rates and worked to eliminate other barriers so students gain greater access to higher education. Such debt forgiveness benefited nearly 8,000 Missouri students and erased more than \$8 million in debt in 2005.

Senator Bray and her colleagues who are committed to providing greater access to higher education managed to head off numerous legislative efforts to sell MOHELA during the session. However, the governor appears to be proceeding with the sale during the interim while the Legislature is out of session, and lawmakers are not there to stop him.

On the '06 Ballot

The General Assembly debated and decided to put two proposals on the Nov. 7 ballot.

- ✓ Constitutional Amendment 6 would provide a tax exemption for real and personal property that is used or held exclusively for nonprofit purposes or activities of veterans' organizations.
- ✓ Constitutional Amendment 7 would require that legislators, statewide elected officials, and judges forfeit state pensions upon felony conviction, removal from office following impeachment or for misconduct.

In addition, proposals will be on the ballot through the initiative petition process.

- ✓ Constitutional Amendment 2 will allow voters to decide if Missouri should welcome all federally accepted methods of stem cell research. The General Assembly was unwilling or unable to address the issue last year. Although Senator Bray was disappointed legislators failed to address the issue, she is pleased that the decision is about allowing research as opposed to banning research as some legislators proposed. Missourians have the opportunity to decide if our state will be in the forefront of lifesaving cures and long-term economic development.

- ✓ As of this printing, Missouri voters have an opportunity to vote on Constitutional Amendment 3 that would restore access to healthcare to eligible low-income individuals and Medicaid recipients funded by a 4 cent per cigarette increase in the tobacco tax. The funds raised would also go toward reducing and preventing tobacco use and increasing fees paid to doctors who treat underserved populations. Senator Bray applauds the coalition of individuals and organizations behind this proposal for offering state government a solution to fulfill its responsibility to improve access to healthcare.

- ✓ Proposition B would amend state law to increase the state minimum wage rate to \$6.50 per hour, or to the level of the federal minimum wage if that is higher, and thereafter adjust the state minimum wage annually based on changes in the Consumer Price Index. Senator Bray applauds the coalition that brings to Missouri's voters an issue that the U.S. Congress and the Missouri General Assembly have failed to address as real wages have fallen, putting more workers in perilous economic conditions.

Emissions Testing in the St. Louis Area



In 2004, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) implemented the Clean Air Interstate Rules with the goal of dramatically reducing air pollution that moves across state boundaries. Upon implementation, the St. Louis metropolitan area was designated as unable to attain the air-quality standards. Because of this, the

Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR) launched an enhanced vehicle emissions testing program. Since its beginning, the program has shown significant reductions in pollutants, resulting in cleaner and healthier air in the region, according to a study by the East-West Gateway Council of Governments.

Senate Bill 583 revises the enhanced vehicle emissions inspection program by decentralizing the testing process. This will allow Missouri motorists to have their emissions inspections done by qualified mechanics of their choosing and to allow most motorists to have their emissions inspections and safety inspections completed at the same place. The bill also exempts vehicles manufactured before 1996 from the emissions inspection.

Senator Bray's concerns in altering this program

were the potentially negative effect on the air quality of the greater St. Louis area and residents' health. Officials from DNR admit that the new program will not reduce pollutants like the existing program does. They acknowledged that the region will have to take further steps to maintain the current air quality, but they offered no plan to do that.

Senator Bray preferred that implementation of the new program be deferred for two years. That would have allowed more lower-polluting cars to be on the roads and for fewer of the older cars – which are more likely to pollute but which are exempt from inspections – to still be on the roads.

Missouri is still required under federal law to meet clean air requirements in order to provide a healthy environment for all who live in the region – especially older people, children and people with respiratory illnesses. Among children ages 5 to 17, asthma is the leading cause of school absences from a chronic illness and accounts for one-quarter of the emergency room visits, costing more than \$10 billion a year.

Due to these concerns with Senate Bill 583, Senator Bray and her like-minded colleagues attached health- and air-quality-related amendments to the bill. The first was a requirement for an annual review of the decentralized program by the DNR for compliance with the EPA's standards. A second amendment permits the overseeing commission within the DNR to restore the use of the popular Rapid Screen testing program, which was used by more than 187,000 residents last year. Finally, Senator Bray successfully advanced an amendment to permit the commission to restore financial assistance to low-income residents for assistance with vehicle repairs.

Senator Bray Teams with Representative Corcoran for Student Safety

House Bill 1180, handled by Senator Bray in the Senate and sponsored by Representative Michael Corcoran in the House, ensures that certain school districts in St. Louis County and other metropolitan areas no longer will receive penalties or pay fines for providing bus transportation for students who live less than a mile from school.

Countless schools within the St. Louis region are



located along high-traffic, high-speed roadways.

Concerns for students' safety led school districts to transport students who would otherwise have to cross these dangerous highways. This violated a Department of Elementary and Secondary Education rule. Senator Bray is proud that the passage of this legislation assures the safe arrival of students to school and puts those dollars back into the classroom rather than wasting money on needless fines.

New Changes in Election Law

How They Will Affect Your Rights

Senate Bill 1014 requires most voters to provide photo identification when casting a ballot this November. Those without a photo ID can still cast a provisional ballot until November 2008.

Senator Bray opposed Senate Bill 1014 because an estimated 200,000 Missourians stand to be disenfranchised by this new requirement. The state must provide free photo IDs to those unable to afford the cost. Missourians over the age of 65 or who have religious objections to photo IDs are exempt from the bill and those with disabilities can vote absentee by signing an affidavit. Voters should also know that only election judges or other election authorities may challenge a voter's identification.

Two lawsuits were filed challenging the constitutionality of the voter ID requirement. And, on September 14, 2006, a state judge ruled the provision that required voter photo IDs unconstitutional.



Other provisions in the bill still in effect include:

- ✓ The elimination of the option to vote a straight-party ticket. Voters will no longer be able to select candidates from one party in the general election by making a single punch or mark. Voters must now select a candidate in each ballot race.
- ✓ Provisional ballots may be cast in all races, but they might not be counted.
- ✓ Children under 18 are allowed to accompany parents, grandparents and guardians into voting booths.
- ✓ Voter registration solicitors are required to register with the Missouri Secretary of State and are prohibited from being paid on a per-voter registration basis.
- ✓ Individuals are subject to criminal prosecution for intimidating or harassing voters with the intent of preventing them from exercising their constitutional right to vote.
- ✓ Anyone using violence or knowingly providing false information to keep a Missourian from voting may be subject to felony charges.

As of this printing, an appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court challenging the lower court's ruling on voter IDs is expected to be filed soon.

“Prevention First Act”

Senator Bray answered the governor's call to “reduce abortions” in Missouri. She proposed common-sense solutions to prevent the need for an abortion. Naming the bill the “Prevention First Act,” she included five proven preventive measures, including education and expanded access to birth control. Without a pregnancy, there is no need for an abortion.

The bill would have:

- Reinstated funding for women's healthcare, including birth control and cancer screenings, which was eliminated in 2003 for approximately 30,000 Missouri women.
- Made emergency contraception, like Plan B, widely available for rape and incest victims in Missouri's emergency rooms.
- Required all Missouri pharmacies - not individual pharmacists - to fill all prescriptions, including birth control.
- Guaranteed that all Missourians have access to birth control.
- Increased the accountability of preventive sex education.

The Legislature failed to act on the bill.

Get Involved!

The Volunteer Center of the United Way of Greater St. Louis works to strengthen area communities by promoting effective volunteer experiences. The program helps link individuals who want to volunteer with agencies that need them and connects companies to hundreds of volunteer projects.

For more information, visit www.stl.unitedway.org or www.stl-cares.org



More Legislation from the General Assembly

Senate Bill 1189 – Senator Bray was pleased to join her colleagues in creating the Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission. It is important to teach future generations about such historical events, so we do not repeat the tragic past. The lessons learned from the Holocaust will help in teaching diversity, tolerance and acceptance of people’s differences. The commission also will educate the public about other crimes, such as genocide, in an effort to deter indifference or inaction toward unconscionable behavior.

Senate Bill 1001 – The bill responds to difficulties experienced by older Missourians trying to comply with a recent law regarding drivers’ licenses. The measure exempts drivers who are 65 and older from showing proof of lawful presence when renewing their Missouri noncommercial drivers’ licenses. The bill also addresses issues involving teen drivers. Although teens account for only 7 percent of drivers, they are involved in 14 percent of all traffic deaths. Teen drivers are now required to log 40 hours of behind-the-wheel instruction, with at least 10 of those at night. Those driving for the first six months with an intermediate license can have only one teenage passenger who is not a member of the immediate family; thereafter, teenage passengers are limited to three for as long as the driver has an intermediate license.

House Bill 1698 – Missouri joins Kansas, Arkansas, Oregon and Virginia in passing a state version of “Jessica’s Law” to protect children from sexual predators. Missouri’s bill requires a 30-year minimum prison sentence for violent child sexual offenders. It will also provide assistance to local law enforcement in catching predators who use the Internet to lure children.

Senate Bill 616 – As a member of the conference committee, Senator Bray worked hard to assure passage of this bill, which requires assisted-living facilities to address issues of staff size, training and plans for resident services, safety and protection. Families with loved ones in assisted-living facilities are now assured residents will no longer have to negotiate a “pathway to safety” on their own.

Senate Bill 872 – Children younger than 8, weighing less than 80 pounds or shorter than 4 foot 9 inches must be secured in an appropriate car seat or booster seat. Children exceeding the weight or height requirements must be securely fastened by a safety belt. MoDOT has launched a Web site to help determine if a child needs a booster seat (www.modot.org/boosterseats). The bill also increases penalties for motorists who fail to stop for school buses loading or unloading children, speed within a work zone or endanger highway workers.

House Bill 1698 – Senator Bray amended House Bill 1698 to include a bill she filed, Senate Bill 1168, creating the crime of promoting travel for the purpose of engaging in prostitution. Additionally, if a business pleads guilty to or is found guilty of violating the laws against human trafficking, the court may dissolve or reorganize the business or revoke its license, permit, charter, or certificate that allows it to conduct business in Missouri.

Senate Bill 725 – Senator Bray filed and secured passage of Senate Bill 725, which allows culinary students who are age 18 or older to taste, but not consume or imbibe, an alcoholic beverage if it is part of the required curriculum. Students attending L’École Culinaire, a leading culinary institution in the Senator’s district, or other culinary schools, will no longer need to delay portions of their studies because of this bill.

Senate Bill 1023 – After years of hard work, Senator Bray is finally able to deliver good news to a few of her constituents, such as Steve Toney, who were inmates wrongfully convicted. The new law expands the timeframe set by a law passed in 2004, so now more exonerated inmates will begin receiving compensation for their years of wrongful imprisonment. Those found innocent as a result of DNA tests will receive \$50 for each day of wrongful imprisonment.

House Bill 1732 – This legislation allows students to self-inject epinephrine to prevent anaphylactic shock from bee stings, food or other allergic reactions. The bill specifies the necessary conditions for self-administration, including a written treatment plan and a signed liability release for the school.



Working Toward A Green Power Initiative

Senator Bray and her legislative colleagues long debated the topic of the state's energy policy. Senator Bray was disappointed that this year's reforms were not more dramatic. However, she believes the discussions throughout the session signified an important first step in moving toward greener energy and decreasing Missouri's dependence on foreign oil.

House Bill 1277 requires that most unleaded gasoline sold in Missouri contain a 10 percent ethanol blend beginning Jan. 1, 2008. The move toward ethanol is led by the need for more renewable fuel sources and will economically benefit Missouri's corn producers.

Unfortunately, the Legislature fell short in passing Senate Bill 915, also known as the "Green Power Initiative," which would have set renewable-energy usage goals for Missouri. After working hard to amend the legislation, Senator Bray voted for the bill. The "Green Power Initiative" would have directed electric utilities to make a good-faith effort to generate or procure renewable energy so that by 2012, 3 percent of total retail electric sales originate from renewable sources. The portion would increase to 7 percent by 2015 and 10 percent by 2020.

Unfortunately, the bill died in conference committee.

Senator Bray has long supported the renewable-energy protocol and believes the Legislature should pick up where it left off to pass this important policy next session.

What can you do in the meantime?



By replacing a 100-watt incandescent bulb with a just-as-bright 30-watt compact fluorescent bulb, you use only a third of the energy of a regular incandescent light bulb and can reduce your lighting energy cost by 50-75 percent.



And you can breathe easier because changing just two bulbs lowers your household carbon dioxide pollution by more than a ton over the life of the bulbs.



For more information on how to save energy, visit the Missouri Department of Natural Resource's Web site at www.dnr.mo.gov/energy/residential/residential.htm

Changes to Campaign Finance Law

House Bill 1900 was passed by supporters claiming the measure would provide openness that many Missourians have called for to determine the source of campaign contributions and eliminate financial contributions from political parties and local committees.

However, Senator Bray opposed the bill, believing that the negative impact of doing away with limits on campaign contributions far outweighed any positive "window dressing" aspects of the bill. She believes that uncapped contributions will only increase the "pay to play"—type antics that have landed some elected office holders in hot water.

Senator Bray has long supported campaign contribution limits — along with a majority of Missourians. In 1994, Missourians voted overwhelmingly — nearly 75 percent — to limit contributions to candidates. The courts overthrew the law, saying the limits were too low. But lawmakers heard the public's concern and passed a law with higher limits.

During the debate on this year's bill, Senator Bray

called on the Senate to pass an amendment that would eliminate the ability of state officials to use the power of their office to personally profit from taxpayers, but her effort was ignored.

Senator Bray did agree with parts of the bill, such as barring fund-raising during the legislative session and keeping legislative caucuses from receiving gifts from lobbyists. She also managed to amend the bill to require the Ethics Commission to post third-party expenditures supporting or opposing a candidate for office on its Web site so voters will be able to follow the otherwise obscure money trail.

The new law also requires lobbyists to file annual reports and report expenditures on staff, employees, spouses and children of elected officials. It should also clamp down on lawmakers' out-of-state travel, because it must be pre-approved by a review committee.

Senator Bray also filed legislation, Senate Bill 945, which would have prohibited state lawmakers from accepting gifts from lobbyists, but the measure was never granted a hearing.

Recognizing the Need for Insurance Reform

Since taking office in the Senate in 2003, Senator Bray has filed a bill each year to answer doctors' concerns



about the rising cost of medical malpractice premiums. Certain higher-risk specialties, such as neurology and gynecology, were hit particularly hard by soaring insurance premiums. Despite the extraordinary actions taken by the Legislature and the governor in 2005 to change laws relating to damage claims such as medical malpractice,

doctors' insurance premiums have not fallen. House Bill 1837, which changed the laws regarding medical

malpractice insurance and the enforcement powers of the Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions & Professional Registration, reinforces Senator Bray's call for insurance reform as the solution to lower doctors' malpractice premiums.

Although the House bill fails to address the problem as intensely as Senator Bray's Senate Bill 881, it provides new tools for the department to monitor and evaluate market stability. It also strengthens the department's authority to act when premiums are found to be unfair, discriminatory or inadequate; enacts new provisions requiring insurers to provide appropriate notification for significant policy and rate changes; and modernizes the department's enforcement authority relating to all insurance laws, creating a mechanism to require restitution for consumers who are harmed by an insurer's violations.

Additional Health-Related Bills

House Bill 1827 allows the director of the state's insurance department to determine the need and establish greater flexibility for health insurance plans issued to associations covering both small and large employers.

The director may also approve additional classes of business if the plan is underwritten and rated as a single employer, has a uniform health-plan design, guarantees issuance to all members and complies with all other federal and state insurance requirements.

The bill also reduces the membership requirement for policies issued to associations from 100 to 50 members.

Senator Bray has repeatedly filed similar bills, such as Senate Bill 593, which would allow small businesses with one to 50 employees to obtain medical coverage through the Missouri Consolidated Health Care Plan.

Because House Bill 1827 changed the definition for qualification of a small business from 100 employees to 50 employees, Senator Bray sees the legislation as a step in the right direction to increase

Missourians' access to healthcare.

Senate Bill 567 makes insurance coverage more available and affordable for patients and employers by requiring health insurance companies to provide coverage for routine patient-care costs incurred as the result of phase II clinical trials undertaken to treat cancer. Clinical trials help identify the best care for cancer patients and often lead to cures.

The legislation also requires health insurers to charge only one co-payment on a prescription if the required single dosage is not available and a combination of dosage amounts must be dispensed to fill the prescription. The bill also offers more flexibility to employers when it comes to healthcare insurance coverage. This act also allows

employers to provide or contract health insurance at a reduced deductible.

House Bill 1440 establishes a trust fund for taxpayers to designate a portion of their tax refunds to the Missouri Cervical Cancer Awareness and Treatment Program. The program will help increase awareness and distribute information about cervical cancer.



2006 Legislative Session in Photos



Sen. Bray confers in the Senate Chamber with colleague Sen. Rita Heard Days.

Sen. Bray congratulates Sally Brayley Bliss, former executive director of Dance St. Louis, for her Missouri Arts Leadership award.



Sen. Bray and Rep. Jeanette Mott Oxford hold a press conference in the Bingham Gallery in support of the Communication Workers of America/Missouri State Workers Union.



Sen. Bray is joined by Rep. Jane Bogetto, Robin Wright-Jones and Sara Lampe as she introduces "Prevention First" legislation at a news conference.



Sen. Bray sponsors the appointment of James "Jim" O'Donnell to the state's Public School Retirement System board.



Sen. Bray sponsors the appointment of Judith Anne Moskoff to the Missouri Community Service Commission.

Not pictured: Ben Kessler was re-appointed to the Hazardous Waste Management Commission. In 2005, Sen. Bray's gubernatorial appointees included Hugh Scott to the Bi-State Development Agency of the Missouri-Illinois Metropolitan District, Patrick Barrett to the Missouri Horse Racing Commission, Donna Beck Smith and Jeffrey Fox to the Life Sciences Research Board, Bruce Olson to the Health and Educational Facilities Authority of the State of Missouri and Nelson Grumney to the Missouri Development Finance Board.

Contact Senator Bray

My staff and I are available to help you, whether you come to the office, or contact us by mail, telephone or e-mail. We are always ready to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the Missouri Legislature.

Be in touch,



Capitol Office

Mail: 201 W. Capitol Ave.
State Capitol, Room 434
Jefferson City, MO 65101
Telephone: 573.751.2514
Fax: 573.526.2612

Email: (Sen. Bray) jbray@senate.mo.gov
(Jackie) jrost@senate.mo.gov
(Kristy) kmanning@senate.mo.gov
Office Web site: www.senate.mo.gov/bray

District Office

Mail: 8420 Delmar Boulevard
Suite LL4, St. Louis, MO 63124
Telephone: 314.340.6582
Fax: 314.993.5209
Email: (Tracy) tmccreery@senate.mo.gov

Senator Joan Bray - District 24



Jackie
Rost
*Administrative
Aide*



Kristy
Manning
*Legislative
Aide*



Tracy
McCreery
*District
Aide*



Vanessa
Crawford
*2006 Staff
Assistant*

State Senator Joan Bray
Room 434, State Capitol
201 W. Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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