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Kennedy Files Bill to Aid Local Schools

Legislation to change penalty provision for cutting summer school programs

JEFFERSON CITY—State Sen. Harry Kennedy, D-St. Louis, yesterday introduced legislation to help St. Louis area schools keep valuable funding for summer school programs. The bill addresses a penalty provision for summer school cutbacks that raised much debate since the passage of Senate Bill 287 last year.

“The penalty was meant to discourage school districts from cutting summer school programs,” Kennedy said. “But the reality is that schools with declining attendance could be punished just because they don’t have as many students from year to year.”

Under Senate Bill 287, due to take effect later this year, districts’ funding will be reduced if summer school average daily attendance drops more than 15 percent from the 2005-06 level. Kennedy’s bill would adjust that policy by applying the 15 percent threshold to an annually adjusted figure based on population variations districts face year to year.

“School districts want to provide the best programs to their students,” Kennedy said. “They shouldn’t lose funding for providing the same level of services to fewer students and saving the state money in the process.”

Kennedy’s bill, Senate Bill 831, would likely result in a penalty for districts with increasing student populations that are cutting back summer school programs and would protect school districts with declining student populations from penalties unless significant cuts are made to summer school programs for other reasons.

“The legislation will merely accomplish the goal intended in SB 287,” Kennedy said. “The bill will encourage schools to offer quality summer school programs without having to worry about attendance dropping due to outside factors.”

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