



MISSOURI SENATOR PAT DOUGHERTY

4TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

SENATE DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS CHAIRMAN
MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 333



Contact:

Pat Dougherty: (573) 751-3599

Kim Green: (573) 751-4128

For Immediate Release:

Sen. Dougherty seeks to empower nurses, assist patients

JEFFERSON CITY – A proposal which authorizes advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to prescribe certain drugs, a certain boon to healthcare delivery in rural and urban areas, could be debated soon by the Missouri Senate, according to bill sponsor Sen. Pat Dougherty (D-St. Louis).

“SB 566 has long been a goal of mine for a simple reason – it can improve health services for all Missourians by empowering qualified nurses to prescribe certain medicines as needed,” he said. “Forty-seven other states have given their APRNs this authority.”

Under the proposal, citizens visiting a doctor’s office could get certain controlled substances from these nurses, who would be operating under collaborative practice agreements with doctors. The change also could help alleviate problems caused by the shortage of doctors in rural areas or when doctors are unavailable in medically underserved areas, rural or urban.

Currently, patients requiring controlled drugs must wait until an APRN first sees them, determines a controlled drug is needed and consults verbally with the collaborating physician by phone or in person. If the doctor is not at his office daily, a patient could have to come back. In rural areas, the script would have to be couriered from the doctor, across county lines and delivered to the remote office. These types of delays could lead to endangerment or prolonged suffering of the patient, Sen. Dougherty said.

“The current ordeal to get the necessary prescription can lead to a loss of time at work for patients and providers, increased expense for travel, poor access to healthcare, and – especially in the mental health field – patients having to share all their information with numerous providers, causing an increase in stress and poor patient-provider rapport,” he noted.

The bill would also correct an inadvertent consequence of a 2005 anti-methamphetamine measure which prohibited the over-the-counter sale of medicines containing pseudoephedrine, a common ingredient in meth production. Currently, customers go to a pharmacy to obtain these medicines, commonly used to treat allergy and cold symptoms. The new bill would allow APRNs to write these prescriptions, as well as for common allergy medicines like Alegra D and Zertec D. APRNs have long safely prescribed numerous non-controlled substance medications, which can be much more dangerous or even fatal than the controlled substances when they are not prescribed correctly, the senator said

“This is a basic improvement which will positively affect health care delivery,” Sen. Dougherty said. “These nurses are extremely qualified, educated in prescribing these

drugs, competent and more than capable of handling this responsibility. Our citizens deserve a system which is as user-friendly as possible, and giving these nurses this authority under a collaborative practice agreement with a doctor will serve our citizens well.”