



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Contact: Aaron Baker
(573) 751-1507

Revised MOST Program and New Scholarships Offer Great Ways to Save for College

Rising college-tuition costs are a major concern for all Missouri families, and lawmakers have been working hard to stem the growth. One state program to help families save for college was expanded this year, and new scholarships through the University of Missouri (UM) System will offer even greater savings. MOST—Missouri's 529 College Savings Plan is offering new opportunities to reduce investment costs, expand services and offer families a wider range of investment options to save for their children's college education. Further, the UM System recently has begun offering scholarships for families utilizing the MOST program.

The state-sponsored MOST plan helps make saving for college easy and affordable. The plan features significant federal and state tax benefits for Missouri taxpayers, including a state income tax deduction of up to \$8,000 per year (\$16,000 for married couples filing jointly). The plan also features low costs and 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week account access.

MOST's new features, which went into effect June 6 of this year, offer new opportunities for those who invest through the program. Under the new plan, investors can choose from three age-based investment options and 15 individual portfolios. The previous program offered only one age-based investment option and two portfolios.

The new program also offers investment opportunities through credit card purchases. Under the plan, families can register credit cards online, and every time a card is used at any of more than 70,000 registered retailers, a percentage of what is spent will be credited to the family's college-savings plan.

In addition to these new services, the UM System and MOST have teamed up to offer 20 new scholarships worth \$500 apiece at each of the system's four campuses. Eligible students must have participated in the MOST program for at least five years. These scholarships offer families additional incentive to begin saving for college.

Contributions to MOST accounts grow free of federal and Missouri state income taxes and can be withdrawn tax-free when used for the beneficiary's higher education expenses. The program holds more than 80,000 accounts, and participants have invested more than \$885 million.

Missouri families can get started in the MOST program for as little as \$25, and I encourage everyone to begin saving for college as soon as possible. For more information, go online to www.missourimost.org, call toll free (888) 414-6678 or e-mail most529@missourimost.org.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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