



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of Jan. 16, 2006

Education Legislation Considered in Committee

Newt Gingrich Encourages Upper Chamber to Revamp Medicaid

JEFFERSON CITY—In observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Missouri Senate stood adjourned on Monday, Jan. 16. The Senate typically works through all recognized state holidays, but this is the fourth consecutive year in which the Senate suspended operations on the holiday honoring the civil rights leader and his accomplishments.

During the shortened legislative week, new bills were introduced and then referred to the appropriate committees. Four of my bills were heard in the Senate Education Committee, which I chair.

Senate Bills 590 and 857 would grant the Coordinating Board of Higher Education more power to do what it was intended to do—coordinate higher education. This legislation would give the Board binding arbitration authority to resolve jurisdictional disputes. The Board would also have the authority to discipline state-funded colleges and universities that “willfully disregard” policies. They could withhold or fine them up to 1 percent of what they were allocated by the state. The new law will finally give the Coordinating Board of Higher Education the power to meet its responsibilities.

Another measure of mine heard in committee was SB 654. This bill establishes the “Associate Degree Transfer Incentive Scholarship Program” to distribute funds to qualified Missouri colleges and universities so that they can offer scholarships to students as incentives to transfer from a state community college. The measure would not only help close the cost gap between two-year and four-year institutions, but it would encourage those with associate’s degrees to continue their higher education at participating universities and colleges.

The Missouri Senate this week was privileged to hear former U.S. House Speaker Newt Gingrich speak about the state’s health-care system, which is in the middle of a major, much-needed overhaul. In his speech, Gingrich commended the Missouri Legislature for initiating a new approach to managing and maintaining Medicaid. Gingrich is the founder of Center for Health Transformation, an organization that advocates more responsibility on the individual level, streamlining technology and making health-care coverage more accessible

to all. He specifically stressed the importance of long-term planning, teaching healthy habits, focusing on preventive care and eliminating the inefficient paper bureaucracy.

Gingrich's message coincides with the goals of Missouri lawmakers. We have acknowledged that to guarantee the solvency of Medicaid, we need to make significant changes. Missouri's state government must keep pace with technological change in order to give you, the citizen, the kind of responsive, efficient government that you deserve. This year we will examine citizen responsibility, explore innovative ways of intervention and prevention, and invest in technology that enables the health-care system to move at the speed of necessity *and* capability. Our society depends on science, technology, and entrepreneurial advancements. We should and will be able to, ensure that when it comes to health care, Missourians have more choices, higher quality and lower costs. As the former House speaker pointed out, accomplishing these goals will not only save us money, but it will save lives.

I will keep you updated as these initiatives advance. The Missouri Senate convenes again on Monday, Jan. 23.

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*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate*