

STATE SENATOR

DISTRICT 5

MAIDA COLEMAN

LEGISLATIVE REVIEW - 2007



Senator Maida Coleman,  
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Dear Friend,

Within these pages, you will find information regarding some of the legislation the Missouri General Assembly addressed during the past legislative session. Several of these measures will affect working families for many years to come. As part of my job, I strive to ensure that bills passed by the Legislature positively affect you and your family.

This year, I worked on legislation dealing with our public schools, license plate tab theft, sexual predators, consumer protection, and many other provisions. I am delighted to report that much of my legislative agenda has been signed by the governor to become law.

Despite the long hours spent this past session on the Senate floor, we still have a lot to do in our next legislative session. Some of my priorities next session include affordable health care coverage for our citizens, assurances that our public school children receive a quality education, and local control legislation.

Again, I thoroughly enjoy serving as your State Senator. My door is always open and I look forward to you contacting me with any questions or concerns. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

Sincerely,

Senator Maida Coleman





I firmly believe we move Missouri forward by expanding health care, investing in our workers, and making college more affordable. While some progress was made, not enough was accomplished by the end of the legislative session.

My biggest disappointment was the failure to use the state's revenue surplus to restore the devastating health care cuts made during the 2005 session.

Two years ago, legislators were told that health care cuts had to be made because revenues were down and the budget was too big. Although I fought the proposed cuts along with many of my senate colleagues, 90,000 of the state's elderly and children had their health care coverage eliminated. Hundreds of thousands of other Missourians had their health care benefits reduced. Oxygen, feeding tubes, in-home hospital beds, and many other life-sustaining products were no longer expressly covered. The passage of the budget in 2005 with those health care cuts was one of Missouri's darkest moments.

Earlier this year, it was announced that revenues had rebounded. At that time, many people thought health care coverage would again be restored to our state's most vulnerable citizens. As the session progressed, it became crystal clear that the health care cuts were permanent.

Due to term limits, I can only serve my constituents for one more legislative session. I will work hard during my last session to restore the health care cuts made in 2005 and ensure elderly, poor, and disabled citizens will not have to choose between groceries or seeing a doctor.

Missouri can only move forward when we insist on health care coverage and affordable higher education opportunities for everyone. An old adage says a rising tide raises all boats. During the next session, we need to ensure all Missourians experience the rising tide.

### Health Care

Nowhere is the need for real leadership more clear than in the area of health care. While other states are expanding health care, Missourians saw their health care coverage slashed and these cuts were made permanent this year.

- 400,000 Missourians have seen their health care coverage cut or eliminated. That brings the total of Missourians without health care insurance to nearly 700,000.
- Health care coverage for 55,000 Missouri children has been cut.
- Our state has seen a 17 percent increase in the number of Missourians without health insurance.
- \$1 billion in federal dollars was sent back to Washington, D.C. When Missouri doesn't match federal funding, we have to send the money back – that is unacceptable for Missouri families and businesses.

### College Affordability

Instead of making college more affordable, this year the state partly divested the very loan program that provided low-interest student loans to Missourians.

- A college education is moving further out of reach for more and more Missouri families – the cost of tuition is up by more than 30 percent from the past four years.
- It takes nearly 50 percent of a working family's annual income to send a child to college.
- The average Missouri student graduating from college has \$16,505 in debt.

### Sen. Coleman Receives Award for Outstanding Leadership

For the fifth consecutive year, Sen. Coleman was honored by the St. Louis Business Journal for her steadfast efforts to advance the business interests of Missourians.

This year, she was additionally recognized for her exceptional leadership as the Senate Minority Floor Leader, a position she was re-elected to earlier this year. (more on pg. 7)



As part of her legislative package for 2007, Sen. Coleman passed bills easing the burden of reporting the theft of license plate tags. She also passed what came to be called the "Mary Wilson Bill," legislation that prohibits deceptive promotion of musical and entertainment productions. (more on pg. 6)

Regarding crime, Sen. Coleman passed a provision allowing the City of St. Louis to adopt a sales tax that benefits public safety. (more on pg. 7)

## Sen. Coleman's Bills Passed by the Legislature

**SB 384** Modifies a procedure for replacing stolen license plate tabs and allows license plates to be encased in transparent covers. (See more on pg. 6)

**SB 421** (as an amendment to House Bill 327 - vetoed) Exempts motor fuel used for school buses from the motor fuel tax.

**SB 422** (as an amendment to House Bill 444) Creates an income tax check-off for contributions to the After-School Retreat Reading and Assessment Grant Program.

**SB 485** (as an amendment to House Bill 399) Prohibits the advertising or conducting of live musical performances under certain deceptive circumstances. (See more on pg. 6)

**SB 605** (as an amendment to Senate Bill 22 and 429) Modifies the "coupling provision" on Section 94.660, which currently requires both the city of St. Louis and St. Louis County to approve a transportation sales tax before a transportation sales tax can go into effect in either jurisdiction.

**SB 623** (as an amendment to Senate Bill 406) Modifies provisions regarding certain teacher and state employee retirement systems.

**SB 624** (as an amendment to Senate Bill 22 and House Bill 795) Allows the city of St. Louis to impose a sales tax for public safety purposes. (See more on pg. 7)



Sens. Wes Shoemyer and Frank Barnitz stand with Minority Leader Coleman at an end-of-session press conference.

For a complete list of bills signed by the governor, go to [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov)

## Legislature Approves \$21.4 Billion State Operating Budget



This session the Missouri General Assembly advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$21.4 billion. Highlights from the budget include increases to education, social services, and health care.

A strong commitment to education is reflected in the budget. Working together, senators and representatives were able to once again fully fund the re-vamped Foundation Formula

for public elementary and secondary schools, seeing a \$132 million increase in the money appropriated to them compared to last year's budget. Missouri colleges and universities are also seeing a significant 4 to 5 percent increase in the funds they receive.

Health care and social services programs in Missouri will see more money as those budgets have seen good-sized increases. The Department of Mental Health saw its general revenue money grow by 6.6 percent, the State Health Department will get nearly \$7 million more than it did last year, and lawmakers have given the Department of Social Services an 11.1 percent increase in state money.

In particular, \$16 million has been added to the funding to reimburse providers for Medicaid services. Nursing homes will also see their reimbursements from the state increase \$9 a day for each patient. Lawmakers put \$2.5 million more in the budget for Missouri's foster care program, increasing the reimbursement to foster care parents about \$30 to \$40 a month.

While there have been budget increases, the General Assembly chose to save \$200 million instead of appropriating funding for other departments in need.



## Protecting Our Public Schools – The Future of Democracy

I believe that each citizen possesses an inalienable right to a free public education. It is a cornerstone of our American Democracy. Underlying this concept is the belief that public schooling will create good citizens, unite society, and prevent poverty.

Thomas Jefferson was the first American leader to suggest creating a public school system. From Jefferson's philosophical belief, the seeds of our public education system blossomed. The American public educational system has been, and is, directly responsible for this nation's greatness, both economically and socially. However, in recent years, this basic American right to a free public education, this cornerstone of our Democracy, has come under attack.

How do you gain political support for extremist public policy proposals that would have been absolutely unacceptable to the public a decade or two ago? You tell people over and over again that their public institutions of education have failed, and that the only solution to this problem is the abandonment of one of the cornerstones of our Democracy, public education. You publicize this failure, and then you explain that tax-supported private education, by means of tuition tax credits or vouchers or some other scheme, is the only available means to improve this situation.

On the federal level, the No Child Left Behind Act combines pro-education rhetoric with a calculated effort to undermine the public school system. The monumental increase in standardized testing required under No Child Left Behind is exactly the wrong approach, especially in today's global market. At the very same time, when educators and business leaders are calling for more "critical thinking" and "higher-order thinking skills," teaching is increasingly being driven by standardized multiple-choice tests. The effects of No Child Left Behind have been dramatic: a narrower curriculum with an emphasis on rote learning and memorization, and the abandonment of higher-order and critical thinking skills. Worse yet, this "quantification" of education service delivery by definition leads to winners and losers. The

underlying political goal of this act is to discredit public education.

By the imposition of arbitrary standards and the incentive to "teach to the test," public funding of private schools is promoted. In this manner, No Child Left Behind represents an ongoing attack on the foundation of free and democratic people.

At the state level, this quantification has allowed the state board of education to mandate a take-over of the St. Louis Public Schools. Two constituencies are damaged: the children of our city are utilized as pawns in this political game, and the voters of St. Louis are

effectively disenfranchised, their right to locally govern the schools their children attend denied. The ambiguous statute that allows for the creation of the Transitional District renders the very governance of the district unclear. The board duly elected by the people stays in effect, its powers and duties indecipherable from those of the Transitional District in vital areas to the operation of the district. The findings of the



Sen. Coleman was proud to introduce constituents Houston Jackson and Gabrielle Hays, who served as pages.

Danforth-Freeman Report, a study commissioned by the commissioner of education, plainly states that "effective, wise, and stable leadership is crucial to the success of the St. Louis Public Schools." How will two separate boards fighting for control of the school district achieve this end? Litigation between two competing boards does not bode well for the concept of stability in the city schools. Is this the stability the study sought?

In the Missouri Legislature, we have seen renewed attempts at undermining public education. Every year, this anti-public school agenda seems to gain strength. I have spent my tenure in the Missouri Legislature fighting this regressive agenda, but I have been listening to the rhetoric of the supporters of vouchers and tax credits. Their argument centers entirely on the problems in the public schools, but they offer no evidence that their "solution" will work.

The tax credit/voucher supporters offer critiques of the public schools and then say that their idea gives some students a way out of the low-performing districts.

*(continued from pg. 4)*

It's the worst kind of "cut and run" philosophy. Let's let a handful of kids run away to greener pastures while leaving the majority of the students behind in schools that will be even worse off: gutted, with less funding. Is this really the best we can do? Do we really want to throw the concept of public education away for a solution that is backed by only critique and selective "cut and run?" It's time for real reform.

I know a lot of people have strong opinions regarding how to reform our public schools, and I am willing to entertain, deliberate, and discuss any ideas aimed at helping our public schools improve, but I do know one thing: our tax dollars should not be diverted to private schools at a time when our public schools are in dire need of funding.

Public schools aren't perfect, and I know that some districts do better than others. And there are many reasons for this disparity. As long as local property taxes are a main source of school funding, inequities will exist. As long as there is intense poverty and homelessness in our cities, our urban districts will be at a profound disadvantage. Let's look at these difficult questions that no one really wants to acknowledge. The education of our children is the single most important task before us. It's our future and the future of Democracy as well.

***Our public schools need our help,  
not our abandonment.***

### 2007 Legislative Session In Photos



Sen. Coleman is joined by Lincoln University Pres. Dr. Carolyn Mahoney (far left) and new Board of Curators appointee Judge Iris Ferguson of St. Louis.



Sen. Coleman presented famed restaurateur Vince Bommarito (seated) for confirmation as a member of the Board of Police Commissioners – St. Louis City.



Sen. Coleman is joined by the women of the Missouri Senate.



Sen. Coleman remembers her dear friend Kim Green, who passed away this year.

Sen. Coleman also sponsored Matthew W. Potter for the appointment to the Truman State University Board of Governors. Potter currently serves as a Deputy Director of the City of St. Louis Board of Election Commissioners.

## Changes to Missouri Higher Education

Senate Bill 389 makes several changes to higher education in the state, including: placing restrictions on tuition increases, selling a portion of the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA), and funding a series of campus construction projects. The bill contains scholarship program increases and expansions for students. The legislation creates the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program, which provides need-based scholarships for community college, public university, and private university students.

Clearly, Missouri's system of higher education was in dire need of change. I voted for SB 389, but with reservations. A provision in the bill that concerns me deals with removing any oversight of the state's private higher education institutions from current law. Yet, there were enough positive aspects of the bill to garner my support, particularly an allocation of more than \$15 million to Harris-Stowe State University.

Other provisions in SB 389 include (beginning in 2011) additional Access Missouri and Bright Flight scholarship funding.

### Access Missouri Scholarship

Maximum annual amount will range from:

- \$300 to \$1,000 for public two-year colleges
- \$1,000 to \$2,150 for public four-year institutions
- \$2,000 to \$4,600 for private institutions

### Bright Flight Scholarship

New/Increased merit-based scholarships of:

- \$1,000 for students testing in the top 5 percent
- \$2,000 to \$3,000 for students testing in the top 3 percent

## The Growing Problem of License Plate Tab Theft

License plate tab theft has been a growing problem in the state of Missouri. More than 11,000 people in the St. Louis area alone have reported their tabs stolen in the last three years.

This session, I sponsored Senate Bill 384, which makes it easier for drivers to replace their license plate tabs. Under current law, a person replacing stolen license plate tabs must file a police report before they can obtain a set of replacement tabs. Senate Bill 384 eliminates the need to file a police report. Instead, the individual would merely submit a signed affidavit to the Department of Revenue stating that their tabs were stolen. The measure also allows drivers to encase their license plates in transparent covers as long as the plates are plainly visible and their reflective qualities are not impaired.



## A Supreme Visit

This session, the General Assembly received a visit from Mary Wilson (pictured to the left of Sen. Coleman), a former member of the 60s singing group, *The Supremes*.



Unscrupulous promoters adopt the name of once-famous groups to confuse audiences in order to sell tickets.

Wilson appeared at the Capitol to testify in support of my bill, Senate Bill 485, and House Bill 399, sponsored by Representative Juanita Head Walton.

These measures were created to prevent identity theft and protect consumers from music groups who impersonate other artists. Language from SB 485 and HB 399 was included in another House Bill 780, which has been signed by the governor.





## Sen. Coleman Re-Elected Senate Minority Floor Leader

Sen. Coleman again received the blessing of her colleagues when she was re-elected to the post of Minority Floor Leader at the start of the 2007 legislative session.

Sen. Coleman is serving her second two-year term as the Minority Floor Leader. This is a remarkable feat because term limits force senators to leave office after completing two four-year terms.

Sen. Coleman says she is grateful for the opportunity to serve as the Minority Floor Leader again and appreciates the confidence of her Democratic colleagues.



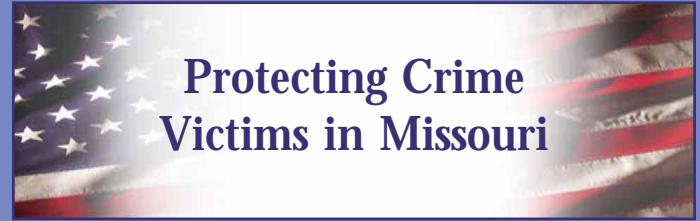
## Replacing Missouri Medicaid

The Missouri Health Improvement Act of 2007, also known as MO HealthNet, replaces the current Medicaid program, which is set to expire June 30, 2008. MO HealthNet moves from reactive treatment to proactive prevention.

This shift is designed to give people more direct involvement in living healthier and longer lives.

Senate floor debate on the omnibus health care bill resulted in the inclusion of a provision extending coverage for women earning up to \$18,990 seeking counseling on family planning issues such as sexually transmitted diseases and birth control and testing.

Cancer screening procedures like pelvic exams and PAP tests would also be covered. Some 90,000 women are estimated to qualify for these expanded health care services.



This session, I filed a resolution that would require sex predators convicted before 1995 to report to local authorities just as sex predators convicted in the last 12 years are now required to do. Recent case law has allowed dangerous sex predators convicted prior to 1995 to live wherever they want without reporting to local authorities. We have an obligation to protect our children. Just because a sex predator was convicted before 1995 does not make that person any less dangerous.

Last year, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that sexual predators convicted before January 1, 1995, cannot be required to register with local authorities. In a case brought by convicted sex offenders, the court said Missouri's sex predator reporting requirement could not be applied retroactively.

My proposal was attached to another resolution, which would have placed the language in the form of a Constitutional Amendment on the next election ballot. However, the measure never reached the Senate floor.

Language from Senate Bill 624 could also find its way to voters in the city of St. Louis. My provision in SB 624 was attached to another bill which has been signed by the governor. Senate Bill 624 allows the city of St. Louis to impose a sales tax for public safety purposes.

Another bill set out to protect crime victims in this state is Senate Bill 429, which strengthens protections and expands resources for victims of sexual assault and domestic violence. The measure also increases sentencing terms for repeat domestic violence abusers from 5-15 years in prison to 10-30 years, or life in prison.

Senate Bill 429 also requires the Department of Senior Services to make payments to medical providers to cover the charges of forensic examinations for victims of sexual offenders. While existing state law requires insurance carriers to cover these costs, uninsured victims are left to pay for rape kits and examinations, a situation deemed unacceptable to many.

Senator Maida Coleman - District 5 - Senate Minority Leader

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