

State Senator Robert Mayer 2007 Capitol Report



Dear Friends,

The 2007 Regular Session of the General Assembly was another productive one, mainly due to the input from you. We were able to find more money for our schools, tax our citizens less, implement sweeping reforms to keep our state medical insurance viable, and pass incentives to encourage the growth of our economy.

Here are some of our top priorities that I pushed for that made it through this year:

Senate Bill 339 *The Fairness in Public Construction Act* - Prohibits state and local governments from requiring potential contractors to enter into agreements with labor organizations in order to win construction contracts. Union-only PLAs reduce competition for public projects, driving up costs at the expense of taxpayers. They also discriminate against the four out of five construction workers in the United States who choose not to be represented by unions. Workers should have a right to make their own decisions about whether or not to join a union.

SB 705 (as passed in House Bill 579) - Allows health care providers from any state to provide care in an emergency. Also reorganizes the State Emergency Management Agency under the Department of Public Safety.

SB 198 - Strengthens charges for distributing controlled substances near a park. Drug pushers who try to deal heroin, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, or

methamphetamines within a thousand feet of a park would be charged with a Class A felony.

SB 127 - Evens out some retirement options for all members of the Missouri Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees' Retirement System, including those who aren't uniformed officers. Also adds another member to the system's board of trustees.

SB 244 (as passed in SB 406) - Extends the termination date for two retirement plans from July 1, 2008, to July 1, 2013. One of the retirement options, known as "25 and out," allows teachers and school employees to retire if they are under 55 and have worked in public schools between 25 and 30 years. The other plan provides annual benefits for those with 31 or more years of service. Under that plan, retirees receive annual benefits of 2.55 percent of their final average salary times their years of service.

Many of these and other measures are highlighted on the following pages. Please don't hesitate to contact my office with questions, comments or suggestions.

Sincerely,

OTHER LEGISLATION SPONSORED BY SEN. MAYER AND PASSED IN 2007

SB 44 - County Law Restitution Fund

SB 45 - Reins in "rogue movers"

SB 46 - Faith-based Liaison Act (see page 3)

SB 100 - Requires health carriers to provide certain claims and financial data to employers

SB 150 - Limits only direct contributions in bond elections

SB 163 - Renews the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund

SB 292 - Revises the interstate compact for juveniles

SB 387 - Missouri Rice Certification Act (see page 2)

SB 388 - Environmental covenants

SB 571 - Biodiesel incentives (see page 2)

SB 706 - Bootheel Recovery Act (see page 7)

(some of these bills were passed in other legislation)



Feeding the Nation and its Energy Needs

Agriculture is a vital industry for the people of the 25th District. Some important measures supporting that industry made their way through this latest session. First, biofuels in the form of ethanol and biodiesel will see more grants than ever before. Total money to ethanol production in the coming fiscal year will be \$15 million — nearly twice what was allocated last year. Biodiesel operations will see an even bigger increase with its allotment going from \$5.25 million in FY 2007 to \$26.78 million in FY 2008. In addition, parts of my bill, Senate Bill 571, were passed that allow Southeast Missouri biodiesel producers to get their feedstocks, primarily soybeans, from closer sources just over state lines, and still receive the state grant money.

Senate Bill 387, which I sponsored, creates the *Missouri Rice Certification Act*. This new law will help ensure communication between Missouri rice growers and the state agriculture department. It creates a 10-person advisory council that will consider issues regarding rice from a producer, seller, and end user perspective. The council will identify rice varieties that have characteristics favorable to commercial interests, and implement identity preservation programs for specific strains of rice. Missouri joins Arkansas and California as the only states with laws protecting the rice industry. During debate, provisions in SB 387 were passed in House Bill 741.



Sen. Mayer meets with several members of the Missouri Rice Research and Merchandising Council during their annual visit to the State Capitol. Pictured (from left): Gary Murphy, John Burnett, Sen. Mayer, B.J. Campbell, and Sonny Martin

Rice has long been a staple of the people and economy of my district, and biodiesel is poised to relieve us of the pressure of dependency on foreign oil. I'm proud our region will be working to provide the food and fuel to keep the nation going.

Honoring a Local Hero

Sergeant C. Dewayne Graham, Jr., was a 12-year veteran of the Missouri Highway Patrol where he served as Zone 4 commander. A graduate of Dexter High School, Sergeant Graham started his law enforcement career as a police officer cadet with the Dexter Police Department while still in high school. He was a full time patrolman with the department from December 1990 to December 1992 until he was accepted into the Missouri State Highway Patrol Academy.

On March 20, 2005, Sergeant Graham was killed at his residence. It was later discovered that the officer had been ambushed, shot by a rifle and a shotgun. Sergeant Graham's residence was just outside Van Buren in rural Carter County. Sergeant Graham had been investigating a single fatality traffic crash where the driver had fled the scene. The suspect was later arrested for leaving the scene of that accident and was

also charged with Sergeant Graham's murder.

This session, I added a provision to House Bill 56 that will rename the portion of U.S. Highway 60 from the intersection of U.S. Highway 60 and State Route ZZ to the intersection of U.S. Highway 60 and State Highway 25 in Stoddard County the "Sergeant Carl Dewayne Graham Jr. Memorial Highway," in order to commemorate Sergeant Graham's 12 years of service and the ultimate sacrifice he made.



NOTABLE LEGISLATION

Faith-Based Initiative

Senate Bill 46, the Faith-Based Liaison Act, which I sponsored, says the director of the state's social services department will appoint regional department employees to serve as liaisons to faith-based organizations in their areas. Their primary function will be to promote faith-based organizations as a way to provide community services to those who normally receive assistance from public programs run by the department. We cannot keep pretending that our churches and communities of faith don't do more than offer a kind word and a prayer to those most in need of some vital services. I like to point to how the churches responded when storms ravaged our part of the state to underscore just how important they are to each and every community.



Sen. Mayer speaks about SB 46 during a bill signing ceremony at the Capitol

2nd Amendment Rights

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, the region became chaotic and the area was declared under a state of emergency. The police then used that status to confiscate legal firearms. Law enforcement officers were overwhelmed and many people were left without any way to protect their families and property as looting and other crimes took place.

This session, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 257, ensuring that Missourians cannot be denied their constitutional right to bear arms during times of emergency. The bill prevents the state or any official from restricting the lawful possession, transfer, sale, transportation, storage, display, or use of firearms or ammunition during an emergency.

Senate Bill 62 overturns a number of court decisions requiring Missourians to retreat or await physical aggression before using force against intruders who have gained entry unlawfully. Also called the "Castle Doctrine," it prevents frivolous lawsuits against those who use deadly force in defense of their homes. The measure also repeals the

requirement that Missouri residents must get permits from their local sheriff before buying a handgun. Those who have law enforcement training will be able to forgo weapons handling courses in order to get a concealed weapon permit. Mental health information will also be added to the National Instant Criminal Background Check System to determine eligibility to buy guns.

Protecting Life

House Bill 1055, a key piece of life-affirming legislation, made it through the General Assembly this session. This bill prohibits any person who provides abortion services from supplying course material or instruction during a sexual education course. Students will learn that the only 100 percent effective way of avoiding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases is through abstinence, and they will learn that material from instructors who have the best interests of our students in mind.

The new law also creates the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Services Program, which provides state funding for organizations that provide help to pregnant women, mothers, and women looking for adoption services.

Organizations that perform, induce, or assist abortions are not eligible.

It also creates the Abortion Public Awareness Program in which state agencies will publicize alternatives to abortion. The legislation will also hold abortion clinics to the same safety standards as surgical centers.

English as the Official Language

In some states, communities that have large populations of people who speak a second language have begun conducting meetings in languages other than English. House Joint Resolution 7 was passed this session and will allow voters to prevent that practice in Missouri.

Upon voter approval, HJR 7 would make English the official language of all official proceedings. Meetings covered under the law include state and local public meetings such as school board or city council meetings. If voters approve the constitutional amendment, Missourians will be assured that they will always understand important proceedings in their state and their communities.

Funding Education

As vice chair of the Senate Education Committee and a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, I was able to help bring home significant increases to our education funding. Elementary and secondary schools saw their money go up nearly 4 percent while our colleges and universities will enjoy a more than \$100 million increase in funding, in addition to what they are able to gain in the Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative.

House Bill 2, funding for elementary and secondary schools, includes a \$132 million increase to schools under the redesigned Foundation Formula and \$15 million set aside specifically for small schools.

House Bill 3 funds higher education in Missouri. It will see more than \$100 million extra, or a nearly 10 percent increase, go to colleges and universities in the state compared to last year's budget. Community colleges and four-year universities will see a direct 4-5 percent increase in their state funding while students will enjoy more scholarships. Three Rivers Community College is receiving \$4.6 million in operating budget funds and another \$2 million through the Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative (funded in HB 16). The plant science division of the University of Missouri's Delta Research Center receives \$2 million from the Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative.

In addition, \$4.5 million will go to a business incubator at SEMO while another \$173,000 goes to a dental hygiene clinic at Sikeston. That facility is a joint venture with our friends across the state at Missouri Southern State University.

There's nothing more important than the education of the children of this state. My work has, once again, helped

make sure that our elementary and secondary schools get more money while ensuring our colleges and universities remain competitive producing high-quality students and providing a brighter future for all.

Sen. Mayer Named Education Chair

I'm pleased to have been tapped to serve as chairman of the Senate Education Committee following the close of this year's legislative session. The education panel, which I had been vice-chairing, is responsible for matters affecting elementary and secondary schools in Missouri as well as higher education.

I've been assigned to the Education Committee since first elected to the Senate in 2004 and am proud to have been part of a half-billion dollar increase in state money to public schools over the past three years. I also helped influence the largest capital improvement project to our colleges and universities in state history with the approval of the Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative that will put more than \$350 million into those improvements over the next six years. I look forward to taking over leadership of this important committee that has such a large effect on our youth as they prepare to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Eradicating the Boll Weevil

Cotton is more than just the fabric of our lives. For the folks in Southeast Missouri, it is the fabric of our livelihoods. That's why we hold the boll weevil, a bug that does \$7 million worth of damage every year to our cotton crop, in such low regard. But we're fighting back. We've allocated another \$539,146 to eradication efforts of the little pests in Fiscal Year 2008. We've made progress in the past decade since we've started the effort. Boll weevil numbers are down and cotton yields are up.

The war's not over, but we are winning it.



Senator Mayer with a group from Caruthersville School on the Senate dais. Schools in the district will receive more funding in fiscal year 2008.



Malden High School students Josh Beard and Brittany Berry were accompanied by Advisor Mary Howell for Team Spirit Day.

Missouri's Budget Situation: A Rising Tide

There's an old expression that goes "a rising tide lifts all boats." I think that is a good way to describe Missouri's current budget situation.

A few years ago, this state faced a looming crisis with revenues in the tank and expenditures out of control. There were withholdings of budgeted monies and hard feelings throughout the Capitol as everyone involved struggled to hang on to programs they thought important and what they believed would save them political face. Even worse, a billion dollar tax increase loomed out there to pay for a bloated, out-of-control government.

But now, we've gotten away from those "tax and fail" policies of the past, and the state's economy is strong, revenues are rising, and spending has been reined in. This past fiscal year, we ended up with an estimated \$320 million surplus.

Over the past three years, our public elementary and secondary schools have seen their funding go up by about a half BILLION dollars. The Legislature also continued its commitment to post-K-12 education by giving public universities and community colleges a 4-5 percent increase over last year's funding while offering more scholarship money and capping tuition increases.

Money was allocated to make sure services for the mentally and physically handicapped are kept at adequate levels. Incentives to promote the growth of Southeast Missouri's

burgeoning ethanol and biodiesel industries tripled from last year.

In the coming fiscal year, we've been able to set aside \$200 million, just in case something unforeseen blindsides our economy again. And we've been able to give many of our senior citizens a break by joining the vast majority of states that now don't tax their Social Security and some pension benefits.

Locally, we've found money to help several programs covering a wide spectrum of people in the 25th District. Some of that includes \$300,000 in the form of a community development block grant for Malden to build a new senior citizen nutrition center. Right now, the Malden Nutrition Center is in a 57-year-old building with structural, electrical and plumbing deficiencies inadequate to meet the elderly residents' daily needs. Over in Williamsville, that town's nutrition center will get \$25,000 to make some much-needed infrastructure improvements to its building and equipment.

Other money includes \$128,400 for the Kids Corral Preschool & Childcare in Poplar Bluff. This Missouri Preschool Project grant will help enhance the early learning experience these children enjoy. Poplar Bluff city police will receive \$48,000 in an Internet Cyber Crime Grant to stop predators who prey on our children through the Web.

It's fiscal responsibility, because you should expect no less with the people entrusted with spending your money... on your priorities.

Budgeting for the 25th Senate District in 2007-08

Money for Our Schools

- Public elementary and secondary education schools in the 25th District will receive more than \$128.5 million.
- \$2.3 million from the budget for state schools for the severely handicapped.

Money for Our Health Centers

- Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative funds \$7.4 million in vital health care services for the 25th District:

Missouri Highlands Health Care - \$4.2 million

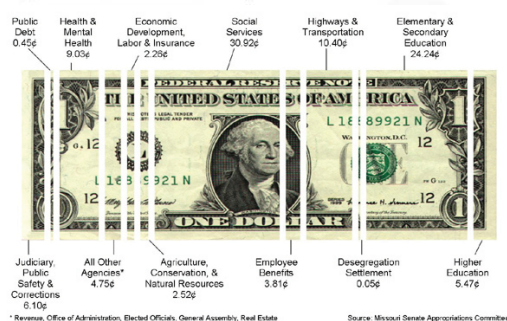
Southeast Missouri Health Network - \$2 million

Cross Trails Medical Center - \$1.2 million

Money to Care for Our Most Vulnerable Citizens

- Southeast Missouri Residential - \$6 million in budget funds to provide habilitation and support services to people with mental retardation and developmental disabilities.
- Poplar Bluff Regional Center - \$1.6 million

DISTRIBUTION of EACH TAX DOLLAR FY 2008 Missouri Operating Budget All Funds: \$21.488 Billion



Money to Spur Economic Growth for Agriculture

- Ethanol grants increased from \$8.6 million in 2006 to \$15 million
- Biodiesel grants upped from \$5.25 million to \$26.7 million
- Boll weevil eradication program, \$539,146

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Visiting Your State Capitol



Sen. Mayer shows Jordan Babcock, Caroline Merideth, and Baughn Merideth the Senate Dais during a visit to the State Capitol.

I would love to have you visit me at the State Capitol in Jefferson City. If you stop in during session (January through mid-May), you'll get the chance to see for yourself how bills make their way through the legislative process. In addition, throughout the year you can take a tour through the Capitol and learn some of the history of what I think is easily the prettiest statehouse in the country.

You can contact my office toll free at (877) 291-5584 or (573) 751-3859 to arrange a time when I'll be there, or you can contact the State Capitol Tours office at (573) 751-2854. They offer tours of the building Mondays through Saturdays, every hour on the hour from 8a.m.-11a.m. and 1p.m-4p.m.

Recovering from the Storm

In 2006, when tornadoes and severe thunderstorms ripped through Southeast Missouri, in Braggadocia and Caruthersville in April and other areas throughout the region in September, the people of those communities were devastated. The damage was unbelievable as entire trees, and in some cases, entire communities, were ripped from the earth. But my fellow Southeast Missourians didn't wallow in their own pity. Instead, they immediately started picking up the pieces, trying to put their lives back together.

The state and federal governments were able to lend a helping hand where needed, and we in the Legislature did our part to help those people affected help themselves.

My bill, Senate Bill 706, as part of House Bill 327, would have used the Quality Jobs Act to require the Department of Economic Development to give benefits preference to qualified companies and projects in places recently declared disaster areas by the federal government. Senate Bill 706 would also encourage economic growth in the region.

I am also working to bring new projects to the area including adding an advanced technology/vocational training

center to provide a higher level of training for high school graduates interested in vocational education and to assist displaced workers who want better skills to be more employable. I am working to help local companies in Dexter and Bloomfield, working to get a rail spur in the industrial park in Poplar Bluff to improve the two ports in the 25th Senate District, and working on infrastructure and other issues to assist companies as they do business in Southeast Missouri.

Unfortunately, these worthwhile pieces of legislation got caught up in a storm of tax credits that made HB 327 too big for the governor to sign off on in good fiscal conscience. It is not dead, however. We'll have another crack at many of the items

that were in HB 327 either during a special session that could be called or during next year's regular session. Either way, I promise to stay on top of this important issue.

A measure that will help in times of natural disasters that did pass and gained the governor's signature was Senate Bill 705. It allows health care professionals from outside of Missouri to come into our state in case of emergency as directed by the State Emergency Management Agency.

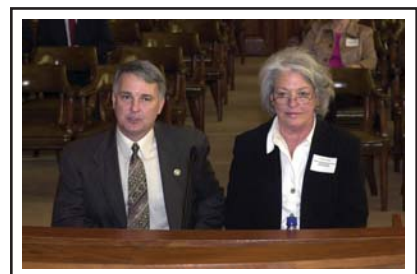


Sen. Mayer confers with U.S. Sen. Kit Bond (left) and a FEMA official after storms ravaged Southeast Missouri.

Senator Mayer's 2007 Gubernatorial Appointments



Counterclockwise from upper left: Judith G. Haggard of Kennett, University of Missouri Board of Curators; Joseph V. Knodell of Poplar Bluff, Missouri Training and Employment Council; Larry W. Plunkett of Greenville, Missouri Gaming Commission (re-appointed); Judith W. Scott of Poplar Bluff, Health and Educational Facilities Authority; Janice T. McElwrath of Kennett, State Fair Commission.





Poplar Bluff students visited Senator Mayer at the Capitol on April 25th. Pictured (from left) are Leslie Noles, Josh Parkin, Ashley Doerr, Jordan Payne, Brennan Myers, Jerrica Fox, Cody Knodell, Ariana Welch, Tori Williams, Blake Talkington, Mitchel Davis, Abby Ivie and Patrick McCoy.



A group from Clarkton School visits with Sen. Mayer at the Capitol. School groups often come to the Capitol to learn more about the legislative process, and Sen. Mayer often speaks to them in order to further explain his role as a senator.

Exempting Social Security from State Taxes

For years, Missouri has been just one of 15 states that taxes Social Security benefits. And that was just plain WRONG! I joined my colleagues in taking action to right that wrong.

Under House Bill 444, starting this year, senior citizens will be able to keep more of their hard-earned money as we implement the exemption. Besides Social Security, exemptions of pensions for firefighters, police, teachers, veterans, railroad, and certain federal employees are also being phased in over the next six years beginning in this year with a 20 percent exemption.

The exemption increases until 2012, when benefits and qualifying non-private pensions up to the Social Security maximum benefit will no longer be taxed. It was phased in to keep state coffers from taking too big of a hit all at once.

Senior citizens have worked hard their entire lives just to have enough to get them through their golden years. Since its inception in the 1930s, the program has promised seniors a return on their investment. They fought our wars, saved the world, and helped our economy grow so we all enjoy the standard of living we have today. We owe it to them to make sure they get to keep what is rightfully theirs.



A group of students from Hayti High School were at the Missouri Capitol on April 24th for "Team Spirit Day" – Pictured are Rashena Tipler, Samantha Sykes, Jalesa Cooper, Canaila Lawrence, Alexi Robinson, Jalen Alexander, Bronson Brady, Tyriq McAdams and Michael Stewart. Advisors Faith Jones and Alberta Cooper accompanied them.

Contact Senator Mayer

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