

State Senator

9th District

Yvonne S.

Wilson



## 2007 Legislative Report

Dear Citizens of the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District,

Now in the history books, the 2007 session of the General Assembly was one of challenges and opportunities.

As in previous years, I worked hard to advance a number of legislative priorities important to the people of the 9th District and to all Missourians. These issues included strengthening safety measures in group care homes, lowering the tax burden on seniors, keeping tabs on those who own stun and Taser guns, protecting youth from the effects of smoking and prohibiting illegal drugs.

I've detailed the progress of some of these and other topics in this report, and I will continue to keep you informed on issues coming before us in the state Senate.

Please don't hesitate to contact me with your comments, concerns or suggestions. The more I know what you are thinking, the better job I can do representing your interests in the Missouri Senate. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Senator.

Sincerely,

Yvonne S. Wilson

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**Assisted Care — HB 952** requires sprinkler systems in most long-term care facilities by 2012.

**Budget — HB 1-13** appropriates \$21.5 billion for state programs and services for FY 2008.

**Children — SB 16** requires vision exams for kindergartners and first-graders.

**Children — SB 25** modifies provisions relating to children's services.

**Children — SB 84** modifies provisions relating to child placements and protection.

**Education, K-12 — SB 112** modifies provisions relating to special education.

**Higher Education — SB 389** modifies several provisions relating to the state's higher education system.

**Law Enforcement — SB 172** modifies provisions regarding supplemental retirement benefits for Kansas City police officers and civilian employees.

**Law Enforcement — SB 198** modifies provisions relating to crime in or near parks.

**Mental Health — SB 3** enacts safeguards for facilities and protections for patients.

**Personal Protection — SB 62** expands justifiable force authority to protect persons or property.

**Public Safety — SB 107** (sponsored by Sen. Wilson) creates the crime of distribution of a controlled substance near a park (amended to SB 198).

# NEW LAWS 2007

For a complete list,  
visit [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov)

**Retirement — SB 406** makes changes to several public retirement plans.

**Seniors — HB 444** exempts retirement benefits from state income tax.

**Tax, Credit — HB 453** gives tax credits for donations to food pantries.

**Transportation — HB 98** authorizes volunteer transportation services for the elderly.

**Unemployment Comp. — SB 433** expands program for veterans of the war on terror.

**Utility Aid — HB 15** adds \$6.3 million to home heating utility bill assistance program.

**Veterans — HB 654** increases the amount of matching grants to be awarded annually for veterans' service officer programs and creates Stolen Valor Act.

**Water Patrol — SB 235** (co-sponsored by Sen. Wilson) modifies certain provisions relating to the Missouri State Water Patrol (amended to HB 461).

## Lowered Taxes, Better Living

### Senator Wilson Fights to Curb Taxation on Benefits to Missouri Seniors

Much of the intent in Sen. Wilson's bill (SB 59) allowing seniors to retain more of their Social Security benefits found its way to the governor.

Under House Bill 444, the state will begin phasing out the taxing of Social Security benefit income paid to the disabled and those 62 or older. Also included in the phased exempting are retirement benefits from certain non-private pension plans such as those for firefighters, police officers, teachers, veterans, railroad workers, and certain federal civil service employees.

The tax phase-out starts with a 20 percent exemption in this tax year for Social Security



*Sen. Wilson introduces a bill on the floor of the Missouri Senate.*

benefits. The exemption percentage will continue to rise each year until 2012, when 100 percent of Social Security benefits will be tax exempt. Over the same time frame, income from qualified public pension plans will be exempted up to amounts matching the respective Social Security exemptions.

"Senior citizens have paid into the Social Security system all their working lives," Sen. Wilson said. "I think the right, honorable and respectful thing

to do is to reduce the penalty of taxation on the Social Security benefits they deservedly receive in their retired lives."

## Safer Use of Dangerous Weapons

Senator Wilson this year continued her efforts to improve the safe use of dangerous weapons.

Senate Bill 61 would have required that permits be obtained for stun guns or Tasers.

"A permit is needed to build a home; I'm working to ensure a permit is needed to own a stun or Taser gun," Sen. Wilson said.

Senate Bill 60 would have prohibited discharging a firearm in the air for celebratory purposes in an urban area.

"Celebrations can be had without the needless added danger of bullets raining down on crowds," Sen. Wilson said.

While time ran out in this year's legislative session before these bills could reach the governor's desk, Sen. Wilson is committed to pushing again for their passage next year.

## Keeping Our Parks Drug Free

Senator Wilson's *Safe Playgrounds Act* (incorporated into SB 198) enhances the penalty for the unlawful distribution or delivery of a controlled substance.

Anyone doing so in, on, or within 1,000 feet of a public or private park can now be charged with a Class A felony, punishable by up to life in prison.

"The use of our parks as drug dealing meeting rooms is a form of child endangerment," said Sen. Wilson.



*Senator Wilson presents the Controlled Substances Near Parks bill to the Judiciary Committee.*

## Senator Wilson Promotes Smoking Awareness/Prevention Initiative

Recognizing that smoking is a serious epidemic in Missouri that adversely affects the well-being of our most vulnerable youth, Senator Wilson backed smoking awareness/prevention legislation this past session.

Senate Bill 109 would have established the *Youth Smoking Prevention Trust Fund*, which would be funded by money Missouri receives through its settlement with major tobacco companies.

The measure also would establish the Commission for Youth Smoking Prevention. The commission would develop and oversee anti-smoking initiatives geared toward young people.

“Patterns — good and bad — often develop at young ages,” Sen. Wilson said. “I will continue to champion this important legislation.”



Senator Wilson (center) at the dais of the Senate chamber flanked by the Senate's other six women members. From left to right are Sens. Luann Ridgeway, Joan Bray, Rita Heard Days, Yvonne Wilson, Norma Champion, Maida Coleman and Jolie Justus. Together, the seven women make up nearly 25 percent of the Senate's 34-seat roster.

## Senator Wilson Advances Foster Care, Food Stamp Program Improvements

Senator Wilson worked this year to provide state healthcare benefits to young adults who had been in foster care.

As incorporated into omnibus legislation (SB 577), Sen. Wilson's concept covers former foster children to age 21.

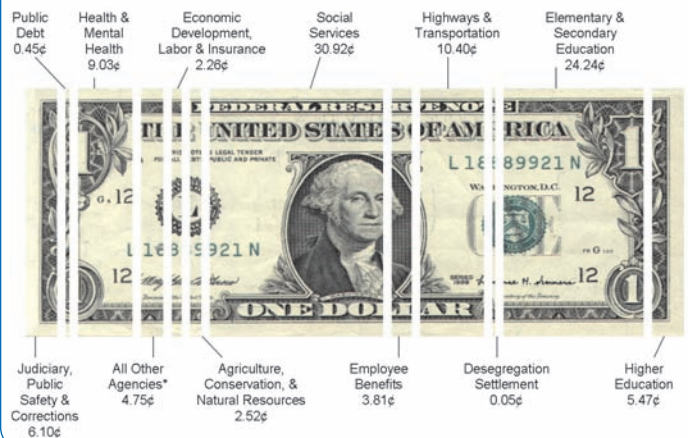
Senator Wilson also championed food stamp program eligibility expansion.

While time ran out in this session for the eligibility initiative to reach the governor's desk, Sen. Wilson has not dropped the issue as a priority.

“I will continue working to extend health services and food programs to more Missourians,” Sen. Wilson said. “Our society thrives when compassion for our friends and neighbors rules the day.”

### DISTRIBUTION OF EACH TAX DOLLAR

FY 2008 MISSOURI OPERATING BUDGET  
All Funds: \$21.488 Billion



Senator Wilson escorts Senator Jolie Justus of Kansas City's 10th Senatorial District for the Senate Induction Ceremony.

## ***Senator Wilson Fights for Added Education, Social Services Funding***

Senator Wilson this year earned a seat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, the panel that writes the state's spending plan draft. Drawing on her past and current experience on the Senate's Education Committee, Sen. Wilson successfully helped secure more funding for schools, scholarships and for those in need of mental and physical care.

### **Features of the state's \$21.5 billion budget for fiscal year 2008, which began July 1 include:**

- √ A nearly 4 percent increase for elementary and secondary education, featuring a \$132-million increase in the Foundation Formula.
- √ Colleges and universities will get more than a 4 percent increase in funds.
- √ The Department of Public Safety budget will go up by about \$45 million.
- √ More than \$1 million was added to catch sexual predators who troll the Internet looking to prey upon our innocent children.

Healthcare and social services programs in Missouri will see more money to better take care of those who might not be able to take care of themselves.

### **Related budget highlights include:**

- √ General revenue for the Department of Mental Health will see a 6.6 percent growth.
- √ The state Health Department receives nearly \$10 million more than last year.
- √ The Department of Social Services receives a significant budget increase of 9.8 percent.
- √ Sixteen million dollars has been added to the money that will go to reimburse Medicaid providers.
- √ Nursing homes will get an extra \$9 a day for each patient from the state. Foster parents will receive an extra \$30-40 a month per child.

"This is a budget that legislators from both sides of the aisle support," said Sen. Wilson. "No one got everything they wanted, but all were able to bring significant help to their districts."

*(See how each tax dollar is spent on Page 4.)*

## ***Senator Wilson Rallies For Group Home Safety Improvements***

A key part of a resolution drafted by Sen. Wilson calling for enacting safety recommendations identified following the November 2006 fire at a group home in Anderson, MO, has been incorporated into legislation sent to the governor.

"Understanding and improvement can come from the ashes of this terrible tragedy," said Sen. Wilson, who represents the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District, home to at least 12 residential care facilities.

House Bill 952 requires new care facilities to have commercial sprinklers installed. This act also sets a timeline for current facilities that do not have sprinklers in place, with a final deadline of 2012. A matching dollar-for-dollar loan is available for qualifying facilities, and a payment schedule is provided for up to ten years. Also, all new facilities are required to have complete fire alarm systems in place, with all currently existing facilities to be in compliance by 2009.

"Friends and loved ones in residential care facilities in the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District and across the state deserve to be cared for in a safe environment," Sen. Wilson said.



***Sen. Wilson (right) on the floor of the Missouri Senate with Minority Floor Leader Maida Coleman.***

## Senator Wilson Receives Distinguished “Pioneers in Education” Award

Each year the Missouri State Board of Education and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education honor individuals as Pioneers in Education for distinguished and devoted service to public education in Missouri.

Senator Wilson was recognized as one of the 2007 Pioneers in Education during the Annual Cooperative Conference for School Administrators at Tan-Tar-A Resort in Osage Beach.

A video presentation of the Pioneer’s life was viewed by approximately 900 attendees as part of the Pioneer Award ceremony.

A plaque will be displayed prominently in the Jefferson City office of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education with others designated as “Pioneers.”



*State Board of Education President Russell Thompson (left) and Commissioner of Education Kent King present the 2007 Pioneer in Education award to Senator Wilson at Tan-Tar-A Resort.*

## “Education Made Us What We Are” —*Helvetius*

From childhood days when she “played school” on her grandmother’s porch, it seemed clear that Yvonne Wilson was destined for a career in education. Ultimately, she devoted most of her illustrious career to the children of the Kansas City School District. Today, she continues to provide leadership to the people of Kansas City and the citizens of Missouri as a state legislator.

Yvonne was born, raised and educated in Kansas City. She and her three siblings were raised by their grandmother and grandfather who taught them the importance of education. She graduated from Kansas City’s Lincoln High School in 1946 and enrolled immediately at Lincoln University, in Jefferson City, where she was a dean’s list student.

When Yvonne graduated from Lincoln University in 1950, there was a teaching job waiting for her in Kansas City. She could not know then that she would return to Jefferson City almost 50

years later, but in far different capacities.

Yvonne later earned a master’s degree in sociology and an education specialist degree in school administration from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. In 1991, Lincoln University awarded her an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree.

In all, Yvonne devoted 35 years to serving the school district of Kansas City as a teacher, consultant, elementary principal, and director of elementary education. She retired from the school district in 1985.

One of her proudest professional achievements was being elected the first African-American president of the Missouri Association of Elementary School Principals, a post she held during 1977-78.

She also was a candidate for president-elect of the elementary principal’s national association, but lost by a razor-thin margin.

*Continued on Page 8*

# Gubernatorial Appointments

During this year's General Assembly, the governor appointed citizens from the 9<sup>th</sup> Senate District and throughout Missouri to serve on different state boards and commissions. Once appointed by the governor, these citizens are then sponsored by their senator for confirmation by the full Missouri Senate. Senator Wilson would like to congratulate these citizens on their appointments and their willingness to serve their fellow citizens as members of different boards and commissions in our state.



*Stanley Archie (left) is joined by his family and Senator Wilson at his confirmation hearing to the State Board of Education.*



*Senator Wilson with Mamie Hughes (center) following her confirmation to the Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission.*



*Senator Wilson introduces Lorene James to the Gubernatorial Appointments Committee for consideration to the Missouri Women's Council.*



*Senator Wilson introduces Jasper Kee (seated) to the Gubernatorial Appointments Committee last year for consideration to the Board of Cosmetology and Barber Examiners.*

## *Education Made Us What We Are* *continued*

After retiring from the school district, Yvonne Wilson worked for five years with the Metropolitan Community Colleges, and then she served six years as a member, and president, of the Lincoln University Board of Curators.

Always active in civic and cultural affairs, Yvonne served as the president of the Spirit of Freedom Foundation, and organization founded by Bruce Watkins, a long-time leader and activist in Kansas City's African-American community. She would later play a pivotal role in the development and construction of the Bruce Watkins Cultural Heritage Center and State Museum. Opened in 1989, the center preserves the legacy of Kansas City's early African-American pioneers. She was executive director of the center from 1990-94.

Yvonne's life took yet another turn when, in 1999, she won a special election to the Missouri House of Representatives. She served five years in the House and was elected to the Missouri Senate in 2004, where she now represents part of Jackson County. She intends to continue working on public policy that benefits the children of Missouri.

A member of the Education and Appropriations committees, Senator Wilson also serves a vice president of the Legislative Black Caucus. She also is a member of the Missouri Women's Legislative Caucus.

Senator Wilson and Jim, her husband of 55 years, reside in Kansas City. They have three children, six grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

Senator Wilson has lived a remarkably productive life — full of civic, educational, cultural and government leadership. Her record of professional, civic and political honors, awards and offices is literally too long to recount. Her accomplishments, however, will stand as a lasting testament to her hard work, determination and vision.

She is the embodiment of servant-leadership.  
She is a Pioneer.



*Senator Wilson reviews legislation at her desk on the floor of the Missouri Senate.*

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