

A photograph of Senator Jason Crowell, a man with dark hair, smiling and wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red and white striped tie. He is standing in front of a large, classical stone building with columns and a statue on top. The text "Senator Jason Crowell" is at the top left, "CROWELL" is in large letters across the top, and "CONNECTION" is in large letters below it. The date "July 2007" is to the right of "CROWELL". The website "www.senate.mo.gov/crowell" is below "CONNECTION".

Senator Jason Crowell

CROWELL

July 2007

CONNECTION

www.senate.mo.gov/crowell

**Ending Unfair
Taxes On Seniors**

**English as the
Official Language**

**A World Class
Education**



MISSOURI SENATE

JASON G. CROWELL
DISTRICT 27

JULY 2007

On May 18, the Senate concluded another successful and productive session. By the time the 2007 legislative session ended, we had sent 133 bills to the governor.

This session, my focus has been on several legislative priorities to make Missouri a better place to live, work, and visit. We successfully began to phase out the state income taxes on retirement benefits, made valuable reforms to higher education, and gave voters the chance to decide on making English the official language of the state.



Education has been a focus of our work this past year. We passed legislation making Missouri's colleges more accessible, affordable, and accountable. Two years ago, the state began using a new funding formula in order to appropriate money to school districts based on student need. I am proud to announce that our K-12 schools in Missouri will receive a \$132.6 million increase this year, which brings the total increases over the past three years to nearly half a billion dollars.

Other important legislation completed this session includes giving Missourians the right to protect themselves and their homes, expanding teacher retirement benefits, and taking care of Missouri's veterans.

I am proud of the work accomplished this session and thank you for the chance to serve Southeast Missouri as your state Senator. Please feel free to contact me with your thoughts or visit my office at the Capitol.

God bless you and God bless America.

SENATOR JASON CROWELL PROUDLY REPRESENTS THE PEOPLE OF BOLLINGER,
CAPE GIRARDEAU, MADISON, MISSISSIPPI, PERRY AND SCOTT COUNTIES.

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2007 - Year in Pictures



Representatives from the Community Counseling Center in Bollinger County visit with Jason.



Jason presents a resolution to Amber Seyer, Miss Missouri USA 2007, of Oran.



Jane Pfferkorn and Evelyn Pullen of Mission Missouri meet with Jason.



Jason meets with representatives of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Eastern Missouri.



Jason and Glen Beussink discuss rural health clinics.



Students participating in Scott County Central's YEA Group met with Jason.

ELIMINATION OF STATE INCOME TAX ON SOCIAL SECURITY

Ending Taxes on Retirement Benefits

Until this year, Missouri was one of only 15 states that still taxed social security benefits. This unfair practice made seniors pay state income taxes on their benefits.

House Bill 444, which I sponsored in the Senate, implements an end to taxation on Social Security benefits, Social Security disability, and non-private retirement benefits. Qualifying non-private retirement benefits include plans for firefighters and police officers, railroad workers, teachers, as well as veterans and certain federal employees. The exemption applies to Missouri residents age 62 or older or disabled residents of any age. Income thresholds are \$85,000 for an individual and \$100,000 for married couples. In order to remain fiscally responsible, the exemption will be phased in over a six year period, beginning this year with a 20 percent exemption. Benefits will be completely tax exempt by 2012.

Seniors have been taxed their entire working careers to fill Social Security coffers, so the state has no right to ask them to pay a second time when collecting their benefits. This legislation allows seniors to keep the benefits that they deserve and depend on.



Jason meets with Ruth Illers of Jackson, finalist in the Missouri Outstanding Older Worker Contest.



This year, I received a letter from a retired firefighter. He moved to Cape Girardeau in order to be closer to family, and was disappointed to learn that the Social Security pension that he received would be taxed in Missouri even though it had not been taxed in Illinois. He wrote that he might be forced to move back to Illinois, away from his family, so that he could support himself and his wife without unfair taxation. HB 444 will prevent this sort of situation from happening anymore in Missouri.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Jason Crowell.

"Thank you for the role you played and your valuable support in ending the unfair taxation policy that required taxpayers (seniors) to pay twice for decades."

– Corinne Grah, President of the Forgotten Elderly Americans



Jason meets with William and Dickie Coomer of Whitewater.

ENGLISH AS THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

This session, the Legislature passed House Joint Resolution 7. If voters approve the measure, official meetings, including state proceedings and public meetings, would be required to be conducted in English.

Why English as the Official Language?

- There is currently no law or constitutional provision that expressly requires English be used in official proceedings, which means any language can be used in official proceedings such as debate on the senate floor and school board or city council meetings.
- The amendment will be preventive in order to stop a problem before it starts. In some states, communities that have large populations of non-English speakers have begun conducting official meetings in languages other than English. This would keep this from happening in Missouri.
- The law does not prohibit translators in applicable situations such as court proceedings. The resolution would, however, require local and state governments to communicate in English and use English as the language of record so that all Missourians will be able to understand official proceedings in the state.



Jason with Cape Girardeau County Commissioners Larry Bock, Gerald Jones, and Jay Purcell.

TEACHER RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Options for Veteran Teachers

Senate Bill 406, which I sponsored, makes several changes to public retirement benefits. Among these provisions is a measure affecting public school teachers' retirement. The measure continues the "25 and out" provision to July 1, 2013, and extends the 2.55 percent formula factor for teachers who retire with 31 or more years of experience.

State Taxes on Pensions

House Bill 444 will gradually phase out state income taxes on retirement benefits including public school teachers' pensions by 2012. They will be eligible for exemptions up to the maximum Social Security benefit (currently \$32,500).

See previous page for more information on HB 444.



MISSOURI'S BUDGET

Missouri's Economy

Since January 2005, over 100,000 Missouri jobs have been created, and the state's unemployment rate has dropped to 4.3 percent, the lowest since 2001. Economic development incentives passed this year will continue to make Missouri a great place to live and work. The General Assembly was able to foster this positive trend without increasing job-killing taxes and instead was able to create tax law that will encourage and support job and industry growth.

Working for Veterans

Missouri has seven veterans' homes, long-term skilled nursing care facilities that have the capability to provide up to 1,350 beds to veterans. Prior to this year, 14 percent of the beds in these homes remained unavailable due to a lack of funding for staff to properly care for additional veterans. In Cape Girardeau, a recent renovation made a total of 150 beds available, however, 25 of these beds were unfilled. The 2008 fiscal year's budget includes increased funding for veterans' homes by \$2.8 million, adding staff for 150 beds and allowing for maximum capacity.



GRANT FUNDING

Protecting Our Children

The Green Bear Club is a sexual abuse prevention program for students run by the Southeast Missouri Network Against Sexual Violence (SEMO-NASV). The Green Bear Club faced problems in January when funding for the program was cut by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). I received letters from all over the district requesting the funding be reinstated. In April, we were successful in obtaining \$53,022 from DHSS in order to continue the program.

"The funding for Green Bear is an investment by Missouri citizens in securing a healthy and happy future for our children."

-Tammy Gwaltney, Executive Director SEMO-NASV

"Green Bear taught us all kinds of ways to stay safe...We want Green Bear back!"

-Emily, Area Third Grader

"I wanted to let you know how thrilled I was to hear about the reauthorization of funding for Green Bear. This program has been such a benefit to our Head Start children, families, and staff."

**-Ellie Clayton, Health-Mental Health Specialist
DAEOC Head Start Program**

ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION

Every Missouri student should have access to higher education. Senate Bill 389 will help make that possible for more students in the state by making Missouri colleges more affordable and accountable.

More Scholarship Opportunities

Families across the state are facing concerns over their children's future because of the rising cost of college tuition. In order to ensure that every Missourian has the opportunity to attend college, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 389, a historic higher education package. The legislation provides funding to increase scholarship opportunities for Missouri's students.

The Access Missouri Financial Assistance Program combines two existing scholarship programs to create a needs-based scholarship opportunity that will include nearly \$75 million for students. This program provides more scholarships to more students who are making an investment in their future by earning a college degree. The number of students receiving the needs-based scholarships will increase from 300 to 1,900 students at Southeast Missouri State University and from 1,000 to 6,000 at the University of Missouri-Columbia. In addition, there will be an increase in the amount of "Bright Flight" scholarships from \$2,000 to \$3,000 beginning in fiscal year 2011. Currently, only students with test scores in the top 3 percent of certain standardized tests qualify for the scholarship. In 2011, students with test scores between the top 5 percent and the top 3 percent qualify for a scholarship of \$1,000.



SECOND AMENDMENT RIGHTS

The Right to Defend Home and Family

Senate Bill 62 removes legal provisions that require Missourians to retreat or await physical aggression before using force against intruders in their homes or vehicles.

- The legislation prevents frivolous lawsuits against those that use deadly force in their defense.
- A provision repeals the requirement that Missouri residents must get permits from their local sheriff before buying a handgun.
- The measure allows people who have law enforcement training to forgo weapons handling courses to get a concealed weapon permit.
- The bill permits law enforcement departments to sell confiscated weapons.
- The legislation creates a provision putting mental health information in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System to determine eligibility to buy guns.

Emergency Relief Act

Senate Bill 257 ensures that Missourians cannot be denied their constitutional right to bear arms.

- The bill prevents anyone from taking actions similar to the New Orleans police chief who confiscated weapons after Hurricane Katrina.
- Provisions prohibit the state or any official from restricting the lawful possession, transfer, sale, transportation, storage, display, or use of firearms or ammunition during an emergency.

SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS



Jason with students from Blanchard Elementary in Cape Girardeau on May 3.



Students from throughout Southeast Missouri visit with Jason on Feb. 22.



Students from Cape Christian School visit the Capitol on March 8.



On March 29, students from Bollinger, Madison, and Cape Girardeau Counties meet with Jason on Farm Bureau Day.



Students from Jefferson Elementary in Cape Girardeau visit with Jason at the Capitol on April 19.



Students from Perry County visit with Jason on Farm Bureau Day on March 29.

SCHOOL FUNDING BY DISTRICT

Public education remains the General Assembly's top budget priority. This year's school funding formula continues to fund schools based on student need. We have continued to increase the amount that schools receive. This year, the budget contains a \$132.6 million increase in foundation formula funding.

SCHOOL	FY '05 State Funding	FY '06 State Funding	FY '07 State Funding	FY '08 State Funding	FY '08 Increase	% Increase	'05-'08 Increase
Meadow Heights	\$1,752,648	\$1,670,807	\$1,788,469	\$1,904,287	\$115,818	6.48%	\$151,639
Leopold	\$704,058	\$749,454	\$849,587	\$884,722	\$35,135	4.14%	\$180,664
Zalma	\$898,834	\$872,745	\$982,650	\$1,015,462	\$32,812	3.34%	\$116,628
Woodland	\$2,648,709	\$2,726,409	\$2,950,289	\$3,161,834	\$211,545	7.17%	\$513,125
Jackson	\$9,411,482	\$10,993,743	\$11,597,221	\$12,186,022	\$588,801	5.08%	\$2,774,540
Delta	\$1,153,821	\$1,144,548	\$1,301,462	\$1,351,828	\$50,366	3.87%	\$198,007
Oak Ridge	\$1,003,434	\$1,358,244	\$1,393,309	\$1,427,729	\$34,420	2.47%	\$424,295
Cape Girardeau	\$5,168,911	\$5,414,119	\$5,894,710	\$6,289,110	\$394,400	6.69%	\$1,120,199
Nell Holcomb	\$778,382	\$804,080	\$878,840	\$996,097	\$87,257	9.93%	\$217,715
Marquand-Zion	\$642,512	\$767,685	\$886,585	\$899,522	\$12,937	1.46%	\$257,010
Fredericktown	\$5,756,441	\$5,630,644	\$5,853,920	\$6,082,947	\$229,027	3.91%	\$326,506
East Prairie	\$3,086,950	\$3,309,335	\$3,539,993	\$3,849,443	\$309,450	8.74%	\$762,493
Charleston	\$3,533,141	\$3,583,304	\$3,816,362	\$4,053,953	\$237,591	6.23%	\$520,812
Perry County	\$3,330,143	\$3,363,671	\$3,585,464	\$3,888,921	\$303,457	8.46%	\$558,778
Altenburg	\$202,459	\$225,293	\$286,221	\$293,248	\$7,027	2.46%	\$90,789
Scott City R-I	\$2,646,224	\$2,681,293	\$2,913,582	\$3,152,839	\$239,257	8.21%	\$506,615
Scott County R-II	\$1,745,724	\$1,643,161	\$1,783,839	\$1,930,407	\$146,568	8.22%	\$184,683
Scott County R-IV	\$2,909,856	\$3,058,318	\$3,239,982	\$3,415,057	\$175,075	5.40%	\$505,201
Scott County Central	\$1,471,635	\$1,569,162	\$1,614,730	\$1,659,951	\$45,221	2.80%	\$188,316
Sikeston	\$11,046,167	\$11,173,827	\$11,786,113	\$12,354,621	\$568,508	4.82%	\$1,308,454
Kelso	\$286,928	\$267,731	\$344,700	\$369,870	\$25,170	7.30%	\$82,942
Oran	\$1,211,957	\$1,243,390	\$1,292,542	\$1,356,342	\$63,800	4.94%	\$144,385
TOTALS	\$61,390,416	\$64,250,963	\$68,580,570	\$72,494,212	\$11,103,796	5.71%(avg.)	\$11,133,796

Numbers based on projections provided by Senate Appropriations staff, May 2007



Jason speaks with students from Eagle Ridge and Clippard Elementary schools.



Trinity Lutheran students practice banging the gavel on the Senate dais.

SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPHS



Jason visits with a group from Eagle Ridge Christian School in Cape Girardeau on April 12.



Trinity Lutheran School students traveled from Jackson to visit Jason at the Capitol on March 8.



Students visiting the Capitol from Immaculate Conception School in Jackson meet Jason on April 18.



On March 15, students from Chaffee School visited Jason.



Clippard Elementary School visits Jason on April 12.

AUTISM AWARENESS

Making a Difference

There are more than 32,000 Missourians who have been diagnosed with autism, and the number of children and families affected by the disorder continues to grow.

One in every 150 children are diagnosed with autism and the disease affects more lives than pediatric cancer, diabetes, and AIDS combined. It is the sixth most common disability and the second most prevalent developmental disability in the U.S. The fight against autism can be won with treatment, research, and education. Autism can be diagnosed early in childhood as soon as parents notice unusual behavior, so it is important for parents to ask for a screening if they start to become aware of irregularities in their child's development. Therapy can allow children to attain a better overall quality of life.

Great strides have been made in the field of autism and increased state funding allows for that progress to continue. This year's state budget includes \$3.9 million to go towards autism treatment and research throughout the state. Southeast Missouri programs will directly benefit from these funds. This will make it possible for treatment in the area to grow, expand, and reach more people in need.

Southeast Missouri State Autism Center

Construction will soon begin on a \$2.6 million Southeast Missouri Autism Center. This center, the first of its kind in Southeast Missouri, will help families that once had to travel as far as Columbia, St. Louis, or Kansas City for treatment. The Southeast Missouri Autism Center will be a destination where young children with autism can go to receive high-quality diagnostic and treatment services from a multi-disciplinary team, where today's and tomorrow's professionals can go to receive the best training available in the region, and where state-of-the art intervention research is conducted. Construction of this facility is planned for fall of 2007 and completion is planned for summer of 2008.



An artist's rendering of the Southeast Missouri Autism Center after completion.

The Tailor Institute



Staff and patients at the Tailor Institute.

The Tailor Institute is a nonprofit organization in Cape Girardeau specializing in working with those that are high functioning autistic. The programs offered by the institute allow these individuals to live independently by offering educational opportunities and employment counseling. The institute received \$200,000 of FY 2007 funds to go towards autism research.

SUPPORTING THE TROOPS — PAST AND PRESENT



This year, I had the opportunity to take a flight on an F-15 fighter jet. This experience gave me a glimpse of the hard work our servicemen and women put forth on a daily basis. I'd like to send a special thank you to the members of the armed forces that have served and continue to protect this country. Your dedication and sacrifices are truly appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jason Crowell", is located at the bottom right of the letter.



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