



## 2007 Legislative Report



Dear Neighbor,

*Former U.S. Congressman William L. Clay, Sr., used to say he had “no permanent friends, no permanent enemies, just permanent interests.”*

*When I came to the State Capitol for my first term, I came with these permanent interests: improving our city’s schools, providing health insurance for all, protecting our personal freedoms, and encouraging tolerance of all people regardless of race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.*

*I fought hard to achieve these goals and found some success. My Missouri Teaching Fellows Program, which encourages top-notch teachers to work in unaccredited school districts by forgiving \$5,000 per year of their college tuition loans, and my amendment to expand the Bright Flight Scholarship Program, are two examples of those successes.*

*Working in a bipartisan fashion, I was able to help eliminate the state tax on Social Security benefits, giving a tax break to middle-income seniors. I also sponsored and helped pass a modest earned income tax credit for full-time workers who remain below the poverty line.*

*Some other issues fell just short of either votes or time, but I’ll continue fighting for them until we get the job done.*

Thanks, as always, for your support,

### Senator Smith’s Staff

Christine Brauner - Administrative Assistant

Stacy Morse - Legislative Assistant

Chris Carter - District Aide

**Interns:** Dan Alexander, Jamie Myers, Benjamin Singer, Tony Thompson, and Anne Tick

### Senator Smith’s Committees

- Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight
- Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence
- Pensions, Veterans’ Affairs and General Laws
- Seniors, Families and Public Health
- Governor’s Advisory Council on Physical Fitness and Health

### Capitol Office

State Capitol Building Room 425  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Phone Number: 573.751.3599 Fax: 573.751.0266

### District Office

4515 Olive Blvd. Suite 210  
St. Louis, MO 63108

Phone Number: 314.361.4333

Website: [www.senate.mo.gov/smith](http://www.senate.mo.gov/smith) — E-mail: [Jeff.Smith@senate.mo.gov](mailto:Jeff.Smith@senate.mo.gov)

## Healthcare - Fighting to Restore Medicaid Cuts

In 2005, the legislature cut approximately 200,000 Missourians off Medicaid coverage. In my first year in the State Senate, I aimed to fix that. One fix I proposed would have set aside a portion of the anticipated budget surplus to restore funding to Medicaid and reverse the 2005 cuts. I could not justify putting away \$200 million for a rainy day fund when it was certainly pouring on those Missourians — many with disabilities — who lost their healthcare coverage two summers ago. In addition, the federal government offers a 60-40 match for state Medicaid spending. That means we would leave hundreds of millions of dollars of *federal* money on the table, which is fiscal insanity.



To that end, I offered amendments to the social services budget but could not convince colleagues to spend \$100 million in order to bring \$150 million more into the state from Washington, D.C. — while ensuring the health of our most vulnerable citizens.

When the MO HealthNet measure — called “NO HealthNet” by critics who say it neglected to restore health care to people cut from the rolls in 2005 — came up, I opposed the plan. Unfortunately, the majority ruled the day, and the plan passed. It will again be high on my list of priorities next session until we get healthcare to those who need it most.

### The Special Session

We worked hard during the August special session to come up with a new economic development bill that increases funding for the Quality Jobs Program from \$12 million to \$40 million. Quality Jobs has helped create 94,000 jobs in Missouri since its inception in 2005 by giving a tax credit to companies that create new jobs in Missouri, provided that the jobs pay an above-average wage and provide health benefits to all full-time employees.

The bill’s most controversial aspect has been the land assemblage tax credit, which offers a credit for the costs of land acquisition for applicants who create large-scale developments in parts of north St. Louis that have suffered from decades of disinvestment. While I support development and using incentives to bring jobs to the city, I have worked with Representative Rodney Hubbard to amend the bill, ensuring that: 1) St. Louis retains local control of neighborhood development through our board of aldermen, which will now be able to choose a plan that best fits the character of our neighborhoods; 2) no developer seeking the credit will be able to use taxpayer subsidies to pay fines resulting from negligent property management; and 3) there is a transparent process during which the public may offer feedback. With those amendments adopted, I supported the final product.

### Green Buildings

As fuel prices skyrocketed, I wanted to help Missouri lead the way in encouraging energy efficiency, so I introduced Senate Bill 649 to craft a smarter, more sustainable, environmentally-friendly approach to our energy needs.

My bill would require that after July 1, 2009, all newly built or substantially renovated state buildings larger than 5,000 square feet must meet the Silver level certification under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System.

Those private businesses that erect a “green” building or modify an existing one would receive a tax break. Green buildings significantly reduce any negative impact a building has on the environment, including water conservation, energy conservation, and human health.

According to SB 649, by July 1st, 2015, at least 10 percent of electricity used in state buildings must come from renewable sources, with that number rising to 20 percent a decade later. Also, the state would provide grants to help public school districts build green and incorporate sustainability concepts into their teaching. We started work on this bill this past legislative session but ran out of time before the bill could be fully considered. I’ll make it a top legislative priority next year.

## Social Security Tax Exemption

I generally oppose tax cuts that benefit the wealthy because they take away from much-needed revenues to fund the vital programs our citizens rely upon.

Time after time, I opposed measures that gave breaks to the rich while balancing the budget on the backs of the poor. So when I saw House Bill 444, which exempted most pensions from state taxes, I was floored at its \$285 million price tag. The revenue hit would come as restoring health insurance to nearly 200,000 Missourians was deemed to be too expensive.

At the same time, I wanted to help middle-class seniors keep their retirement benefits while making sure multi-millionaires did not get an unneeded break. Though the majority party had the votes to pass the bill, I searched for a compromise solution that would keep it affordable and target middle-class seniors for relief instead of the super-rich. So, my staff and I drafted a series of 14 amendments instituting income eligibility caps to ensure that any tax cut would focus on middle-

class retirees. I was ready to talk all night fighting for what was right, and I used the threat of a filibuster (and my huge stack of amendments) as leverage to bring the bill sponsors to the bargaining table.

After three rounds of negotiations with a bipartisan group of legislators to 1) phase in the tax cut slowly, 2) make it more affordable, and 3) target middle-class seniors for tax relief instead of the very wealthy, we compromised. We phased in the cut over six years and limited the benefits to individuals making less than \$85,000 per year, thus reducing the budget hit to just \$22 million next year, instead of \$177 million. Over six years, our compromise will save the state an estimated \$466 million.

No one loved the compromise, but we could all live with it. It's a vast improvement over the original House bill because it helps middle-class seniors without busting the budget — and a good example of what you can accomplish when you set aside partisanship and cooperate to fix a problem.



Sen. Smith confers with Sen. Maida Coleman (St. Louis) during their work on the Senate floor



Sen. Smith meets with senior citizens in the 4th Senate District.

## Earned Income Tax Credit

Too often, our hard-working, tax-paying citizens have been left behind as others enjoy tax breaks, ranging from incentives that benefit major meat producers to giveaways for oil companies.

I wanted to change that and create a state Earned Income Tax Credit. The federal EITC has given millions of the nation's working poor a few more dollars to help them meet the everyday expenses of life: food, rent, utilities, etc. A state EITC could have the same power of giving a helping hand to those who are doing all they can to make ends meet.

Under SB 608, the state would offer a nonrefundable tax credit up to 20 percent of the federal EITC. The EITC is targeted to full-time workers struggling to lift themselves out of poverty — and experts across the ideological spectrum have called it the most successful anti-poverty program ever enacted.

Although Senate Bill 608 itself did not become law this year, a smaller version of it sponsored by Senator Jolie Justus became law. We'll spend next session working to expand the credit.

## Unclaimed Property

Millions of dollars of unclaimed treasures (whose owners could not be contacted) are turned over to the Missouri State Treasurer's office. Some of that could be yours! To file a claim or to see if the Treasurer's office has property of yours go to:

[www.showmemoney.com](http://www.showmemoney.com) or  
Missouri State Treasurer  
P.O. Box 1004

Jefferson City, MO 65102-1004

# Senator Jeff Smith's

For far too long, students in the St. Louis Public Schools have suffered because of the system's turmoil. The State Board of Education recently appointed a transitional school board to run the district, but it has yet to emerge with a comprehensive plan for the district's future. That's why I teamed up with my colleague from the state House, Rep. T.D. El-Amin of St. Louis, to craft legislation addressing this critical issue. Our plan would strengthen educators, improve student achievement, and enhance school safety.

Our public schools are losing too many qualified teachers

— indeed, nearly 300 city teachers lacked certification this past year — and that is having a severe impact on the quality of education. So, Rep. El-Amin and I introduced several measures to attract and retain the best teachers in our schools. For instance, I passed legislation modeled after the renowned Teach For America program, one of our nation's most successful innovations in education over the last 15 years. The program, which creates a \$1 million fund to finance a corps of Missouri Teaching Fellows, is described in detail on the opposite page.

## Strengthening Our Educators

SLPS students are too far behind students in other states and in other industrialized nations — especially in science and math scores. That's why we proposed significant bonuses for teachers in subject areas where the SLPS faces acute shortages, such as science, math, and special education. We also proposed an incentive pay package that would allow teachers the chance to double their salaries — but only if they can help their students make substantial academic gains. An-



Sen. Smith confers with colleagues Sen. Jack Goodman, Mt. Vernon, and Sen. Wes Shoemyer, Clarence, to craft bipartisan legislation good for Missouri students and teachers.

other component of our plan would create a teacher assessment program requiring that teachers take tests every five years to demonstrate competence in their core area. Teachers would have two chances to get 60 percent of the questions correct in a test of the material that they teach. There are many excellent teachers in our district, but there are too many working out of their area of expertise. We've got to ensure our children are taught by teachers who know their subject.

## Helping Missouri Students Achieve

Other ideas included a plan for state-subsidized early childhood education for all SLPS students qualifying for the federal free lunch program. More brain development occurs by age 4 than in the rest of a person's life — and we need to make critical investments so that children come to kindergarten ready to learn.

We must help our children form lasting bonds with teachers, coaches, and principals that will increase both



Sen. Smith and Rep. Connie Johnson (far left) welcome students from Northwest Academy from their St. Louis city districts.

academic achievement and the odds that a student will stay in school. To help facilitate those relationships, we proposed a pilot "looping" program to give some SLPS students the chance to stay with the same teachers for as long as three years. Such programs have been shown to reduce discipline problems while increasing parental involvement, teacher satisfaction, and student achievement.



Sen. Smith meets with students visiting the State Capitol during the past legislative session.

# Education Priorities

## Safe and Orderly Schools

Students cannot be expected to learn in a chaotic environment. That's why we proposed new state funding for alternative schools with specialized programs to reach challenging students, and supplemental state aid to help social workers locate truants, re-enroll them in school, and provide an array of social services to help stabilize their families. Finally, we also must ensure that children can access a safe and positive environment after school through enriching after-school programs in everything from painting to poetry to basketball.

Additionally, I visited 31 city schools, looking for feedback from parents, teachers, and administrators. Along with dozens of neighborhood meetings and other forums, I held a town hall on education issues and attended the April meeting of the SLPS Parent Assembly, where I received valuable input that helped me revise my proposals. I tried to move past the ideological warfare and the political bickering that has characterized civic discourse on education the last few years — a requirement in order to make real, lasting improvements in our schools.

## Missouri Teaching Fellows Program

The Missouri Teaching Fellows Program was a priority of mine from the beginning of the session, and after months of debate and compromise, it became my first bill to clear both chambers and be signed by the governor. While it began as a stand-alone measure, it wound up as an amendment to the larger omnibus higher education bill (SB 389).

This program will encourage the brightest teachers to work

in struggling school districts by forgiving up to \$5,000 of college tuition loans (annually for up to four years) for the most talented young teachers who agree to stay in Missouri for college and then teach in non-accredited school districts. It will help attract the best and brightest young teachers to start their careers in the SLPS. Let us hope that once they begin, they will find it an enriching and rewarding experience.

## Bright Flight

We need to make sure the cost of a higher education is within the reach of all Missourians. But we must especially work to keep our best and brightest students here in Missouri, and I was proud to have passed an amendment this year to expand our Bright Flight scholarship program. Starting in 2011, we raised the merit-based scholarship for students who test in the top 3 percent of those taking college entrance exams

(ACTs or SATs) from \$2,000 to \$3,000 a year for four years. In addition, we broadened the program by enacting a new scholarship for students in the top 5 percent of their class.

These students will eventually obtain high-skill, high-wage jobs in the region and continue adding to the city's tax base. They're the people who will help accelerate the renaissance of our great city.

The good news is that most of these measures passed the Senate in some form. The bad news is that most did not reach the governor's desk. I fought against substantial organized opposition to many of these proposals from an array of groups; the legislative process can be full of land mines at every turn. But we can't let that stand in our way; when 60 percent of kids are dropping out of the city schools, dramatic change is needed NOW before we lose a generation of kids.

So I try to remind myself that — unlike the teachers, the administrators, the school boards, or the law firms that represent them — the children who our schools have failed have no lobbyists to look out for them in Jefferson City. It is our job to do so, and though our efforts fell short in some areas, we've laid the groundwork for the next round — and along with colleagues like Rep. El-Amin, I'll continue to fight until we prevail.



Sen. Smith and students from Mineral Area College meet at the State Capitol in Jefferson City.

## The Wisdom of Age

This summer I had the pleasure of visiting many retirement centers to learn how the residents felt about the state of Missouri. We discussed Medicare and Medicaid, prescription drug costs, accountability in nursing homes, and the state of the city schools. Many seniors offered perspectives that I had never considered. Thank you to all the centers who opened their doors for me: Northside Senior Center, Union-Sarah Senior Center, Wesley House Senior Center, Hylton Point Apartments, and Tower Village Three. There was one consistent lesson I learned in all of the facilities I visited — always bring extra doughnuts.

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## 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament

Thanks to everyone who attended or volunteered at the second annual Jeff Smith 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament. There were many free health screenings available this year. A local chiropractic college offered posture and blood pressure screenings; the Missouri Optometric Association had vision screenings, and the American Red Cross conducted a blood drive. Other health organizations present included: The American Disabled for Accessible Public Transit group (ADAPT) who work with the mentally ill, St. Louis City Health Department, and Planned Parenthood. Fittingly, there was a petition circulated to reinstate the 2005 Medicaid cuts.

Numerous literacy organizations participated including: Literacy Investment for Tomorrow (LIFT), the Literacy Roundtable, the Literacy Council, First Book-St. Louis, Ready Readers, the Missouri Humanities Council and the St. Louis Public Library, which took library card applications. We distributed hundreds of donated books and bags of school supplies to children. Other community organizations included: The St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment (SLATE), Operation Brightside, Beyond Housing, Food Outreach, Better Family Life, Parents as Teachers, University of Missouri Extension, Head Start, Parent Link, Child Care Resource and Referral, Poison Control, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters and Latchkey/YWCA. The unions served food and drinks all day.

All of the basketball players received T-shirts, and trophies and prizes went to the winners, including new bicycles and tickets to a local amusement park and certificates to local businesses. More than a thousand people enjoyed the event.

## We Need Volunteers!

There is a dire need for volunteer mentors for UrbanFUTURE, which partners with families, schools, and the community to promote the success of urban youth through character growth, academic achievement, and career preparation. UrbanFUTURE is one of the most successful local school-based programs of the last decade in St. Louis. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Tiffany at UrbanFUTURE at (314) 776-3434.



(Above) A union worker works the grill at the Jeff Smith 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament.  
(Below) The kids were the focus of Sen. Smith's day.



Sen. Smith congratulates some of the winners from this summer's basketball tournament.



Cut along dotted line and send survey in to address on back

## 4<sup>th</sup> District Survey

- If there was subsidized day care available for your 3-5 year old children would you send them to school earlier than kindergarten? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_ NA\_\_\_
- Do you feel that teachers whose students show the most academic progress should have the chance to earn higher salaries? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you feel that school uniforms would help enhance the learning environment? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you believe that teachers should confirm their competence in the subject area they teach every 5 to 10 years? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you think that teachers who specialize in math and science and other areas that have teaching shortages should receive extra compensation? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you believe that the school day should be longer?  
The school day is currently seven hours long. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you believe students should attend school more days a year? Currently, there are 174 days in the school year. Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you believe that children who have chronic truancy, behavior problems, or developmental delays should be separated in alternative schools to work with teachers who are trained in addressing these needs? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you believe that having the same homeroom teacher for consecutive years would be beneficial for children? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- If you have children, are they involved in after school activities? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ NA\_\_\_
  - If not, is it because of money? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ NA\_\_\_
  - Transportation? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ NA\_\_\_
  - A lack of good programs? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ NA\_\_\_
- Would you support a state initiative directing all state government buildings to draw 10 percent of their energy from renewable sources by 2015? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Would you support a tax credit for people who construct or modify buildings to increase environmental efficiency or sustainability? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Do you support embryonic stem cell research to help scientists discover treatments for currently incurable diseases? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_
- Would you support public financing of campaigns as a way to reduce the influence of special interest groups? Yes\_\_\_No\_\_\_ Don't know\_\_\_

(Optional)

- Please give us your zip code\_\_\_\_\_ How long have you lived in the 4th Senatorial District?\_\_\_\_\_

State Senator Jeff Smith  
201 W. Capitol Ave.  
Room 425  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Place  
Stamp  
Here

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Please be sure to fold the outgoing survey in thirds, so that only the outgoing address is visible.

## Gubernatorial Appointments from the 4<sup>th</sup> Senate District



Sen. Smith with Thomas J. Crowley, member of the Coordinating Board for Early Childhood



Sen. Smith with Jean M. Cavendar, member of the Holocaust Education and Awareness Commission



Sen. Smith with Kimberly Mathis, member of the Children's Trust Fund Board

Not pictured:

**Carol Wilson:** Board of Election Commissioners for St. Louis City

**Vincent J. Bommarito:** St. Louis City Board of Police Commissioners

**Senator Jeff Smith**

201 W Capitol Ave RM 425  
Jefferson City MO 65101

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