



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# Teach for Missouri Plan Reinvests in Struggling School Districts

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JEFFERSON CITY — In the opening weeks of the 2007 session, lawmakers already have made education one of the keystone issues facing the Legislature this year. It is my job to make sure the dialogue on Missouri schools focuses on making real improvements in academic performance, and that is why I am introducing a plan to attract more talented teachers to disadvantaged districts. My Teach for Missouri proposal will provide incentives for young people to become teachers and join low-income communities to help close the achievement gap with wealthier districts.

Under the plan, students who perform well in school and obtain a degree in education are able to receive college-loan payments if they agree to teach in certain districts. Teach for Missouri is available for high school seniors who rank in the top 10 percentile of their graduating class and score in the top 20 percentile on the ACT or SAT, or vice versa. Upon graduating from high school, these students then must attend a Missouri college or university, earn a cumulative grade-point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 on a 4-point scale, and receive an education certificate. Students who do not qualify for the high school portion but earn their degree with a GPA of at least 3.0 may also qualify.

Once the students have received their certification, they then must agree to teach at school districts deemed “provisionally accredited” or “unaccredited” by the Missouri Department of Education. These are the districts most in need of help, and directing successful young teachers to these communities will be vital in turning their fortunes around.

At the conclusion of each of the first four academic years teaching in these districts, the educators are then able to receive up to \$5,000 per year to pay back student loans. When the fifth year has been completed, they are eligible for a \$1,000 bonus. My plan establishes a Teach for Missouri Fund with an annual cap of \$1 million to pay for these incentives.

This program is modeled on Teach For America, which has attracted more than 17,000 skilled individuals to low-income communities in its 16 years of service. There are currently some 4,400 Teach For America members working in 25 areas profoundly affected by the achievement gap.

In addition, corps members are becoming increasingly effective as they gain experience and as Teach For America continues to refine its training and development practices. In fact, a 2004 study by Mathematica Policy Research shows that Teach for America members see better progress in math and reading skills in a year than is typically expected. Furthermore, a 2005 survey of school principals found that 63 percent found Teach For America teachers to be more effective than their overall teaching faculty, with respect to their impact on student achievement.

I believe Teach for Missouri can have a similar impact in our state. By finding ways to invest more human resources in our schools, we have the chance to offer new opportunities for Missouri students and give hope to struggling communities.

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