



## MISSOURI SENATE

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# Bi-Partisan Support for Quality Teachers and Prescription Medications

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JEFFERSON CITY —Lawmakers often face a variety of loyalties. We are obligated to represent the interests of our constituents while helping form policy for the entire state. One measure I am sponsoring and another I am co-sponsoring will have a lasting impact not just on the people of St. Louis, but people across the state. The first bill would recruit and train a new generation of world-class public school teachers; the second would require pharmacies to fill prescriptions for contraceptives.

My first piece of legislation, Senate Bill 443, is modeled after the widely acclaimed Teach For America program - and like TFA, it is based on the premise that the quality of classroom instruction is the single most important determinant of how much a child will learn. Dozens of scholarly studies support this premise, and I believe it's time that Missouri steps up to be a national leader in this area.

Under my bill, Missouri would make a deal with high school seniors who are in the top 10% of their class (according to ACT scores or grade point average): if they will agree to stay in Missouri for college and obtain a teaching certificate in college, the state will forgive one year of their college tuition loans in exchange for each year of teaching in a provisionally accredited or unaccredited school district. After four years of teaching, recipients could repay all of their tuition loans if they'll teach in districts where the need for top-notch instruction is most acute.

Thanks to my colleagues' interest in improving achievement in troubled districts (and thanks also to their patience, as I've discussed this bill with nearly all of them), 24 Senators are co-sponsoring SB 443.

I'm most proud of the fact that in the often-polarized political environment of Jefferson, 12 co-sponsors are Democrats and 12 are Republicans.

I am also co-sponsoring legislation requiring pharmacies to dispense contraceptives that have been legally prescribed. Under SB 72, pharmacies must fill the prescription or provide a suitable alternative within a normal time frame. The legislation also contains language stating that pharmacies have a duty to ensure customers are not subjected to indignity, humiliation, breaches of confidentiality, or pressure not to request the prescription.

This legislation has been filed for good reason. There have been instances, including at least one case in Missouri, of pharmacists refusing to fill contraceptive prescriptions. Further, legislation has been filed in each of the past two years that would allow pharmacists to refuse filling contraceptive prescriptions if they so desired. The law on this matter must be clear: every Missourian should have the right to fill prescriptions for legal medications.

The common thread between these two measures is that while they will clearly benefit St. Louisans, they are designed to help people across the state. By ensuring that disadvantaged students have access to our state's best and brightest minds, and by making sure that all citizens have the right to legal prescriptions, the Legislature will serve our entire state.

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