



# MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Maida Coleman  
5<sup>th</sup> Senate District

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **St. Louis Senators Urge State Board of Education to Consider Facts**

JEFFERSON CITY – Before the State Board of Education considers action this week with the administration of the St. Louis Public School District, Senate Minority Floor Leader Maida Coleman, D-St. Louis, and Sens. Harry Kennedy and Jeff Smith sent a letter to members of the state board and the Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Kent King urging them to consider four points before deciding the future of the local school district.

The Senators noted the absence of a state board member from St. Louis, despite the fact that St. Louis Public Schools is the largest school district in the state.

"This lack of representation prevents the board from being privy to local points of view," Coleman said. "How can important education decisions about the St. Louis Public Schools be fairly made when there is not representation on the state board from the area?"

Furthermore, the lawmakers drew attention to the fact that the originally scheduled review for the St. Louis Public Schools had been set for 2008, but the review clearly is now being fast-tracked.

"Unfortunately, the state board has been forced into action by the pro-voucher, anti-public-education politicians who are essentially browbeating state board members to the point we have reached today," Coleman said.

The timing of the state board's action is causing a third concern for area lawmakers. St. Louis voters are just six weeks away from a local school board election during which voters will elect two more district residents to have a say in the fate of St. Louis schools. Coleman said the addition of community stakeholders should provide the stability their district needs.

"A transitional board implemented by the state board denies the people of St. Louis their constitutionally granted voice in their own schools," she said.

Although Coleman agrees that more focused efforts are necessary in order to provide the struggling local school district with a way out of its academic crisis, she is against what seems to be an unnecessarily hasty attempt to solve the problem.

Coleman said that the district, under the leadership of Superintendent Diana Bourisaw, has clear near-term goals and is working towards those goals with the help of several stakeholders in the district.

"Our final point is that if the board decides tomorrow that the state will indeed take over the St. Louis Public School District, there will not be any appreciative effect on academics during this school year," Coleman said. "For this reason, I, along with my St. Louis counterparts, see no reason to rush forward with a plan that may or may not have positive results. Ultimately, we all want what is best for our school children, but at this time, we do not know whether a state takeover will do anything of the sort."

In the concluding paragraph of the letter, Coleman, Kennedy and Smith called on the State Board of Education to postpone their decision and instead give the St. Louis Public School District the chance to improve itself with the upcoming school board election and the fulfillment of the superintendent's goals.

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