



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of January 08, 2007**

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Ready to Roll

JEFFERSON CITY – During the second week of the 2007 session, the Missouri Senate continued setting the stage for legislative debate. Lawmakers spent most of the week completing procedural matters, such as assigning senators to committees, approving Senate rules of conduct and reading pre-filed legislation.

The Senate president pro tem this week finished appointing legislators to Senate committees. Each state senator serves on several legislative committees specializing in certain issues. To reflect the Legislature's added focus on patient safety at state-licensed mental health facilities this year, the Senate has established a new committee specializing in mental health issues — the Senate Health and Mental Health Committee. It and the Seniors, Families and Public Health Committee have replaced the now-defunct Aging, Families, Mental and Public Health Committee.

I'm honored to have been chosen to serve on this important new committee, which will serve a vital role in considering legislation to reform our state healthcare system and to protect the safety and welfare of Missourians with mental illnesses.

As a family farmer in Monroe County for the past 30 years, I'm really excited to have the chance to serve on the Senate Agriculture, Conservation, Parks and Natural Resources Committee. This committee deals with legislation relating to animals, animal disease, pest control, agriculture, the state park system, conservation of the state's natural resources, soil and water, wildlife and game refuges.

I've also been assigned to the Economic Development, Tourism and Local Government Committee, which deals with the promotion of economic development, tourism and the promotion of tourism as a state industry, community and business development, county government, township organizations and political subdivisions.

Finally, I've been asked to serve on the Government Accountability & Fiscal Oversight Committee, which considers all bills, except regular appropriation bills, requiring new funding or expenditures over \$100,000, or which cut funding by that amount during any of the first three years that public dollars will be used to implement the legislation. The committee also hears all bills referred to it relating to budget reform, governmental efficiency and management.

In addition to outlining committee work, senators again rejected a proposed rule change that would have allowed them to use laptop computers on their desks in the Senate chamber. Supporters of the plan said it would offer senators more efficient means of reading legislation and researching issues. Opponents say laptops would offer too many distractions and disrupt Senate decorum.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-7852.