



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer
18th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Contact: Kathy Armstrong
(573) 751-7852**

Shoemyer Bill Restores Healthcare To Thousands of Missourians

JEFFERSON CITY – Two years ago majority Republicans in the General Assembly eliminated healthcare for tens of thousands of Missourians who had been receiving assistance through Medicaid. This week I introduced a bill to restore healthcare to those citizens who lost services when Governor Blunt made the cuts in 2005.

Senate Bill 581 defines the healthcare problem comprehensively and proposes a comprehensive solution. The current healthcare crisis did not happen overnight and cannot be solved overnight, but SB 581 is a good place to start.

The bill builds on the success other states have had by expanding Medicaid healthcare to cover the uninsured. Right now, 700,000 Missourians have no health insurance, and because of the Medicaid cuts in 2005, that number is growing. It should be unacceptable to everyone that thousands of Missourians do not have access to a doctor when they are sick or injured, or can't get regular checkups to prevent disease.

SB 581 also restores access to healthcare to the 100,000 Missourians who lost coverage two years ago and restores Medicaid services to the 300,000 Missourians who lost them. It doesn't make any sense to provide someone with a wheelchair but not the battery to run that wheelchair. For those people, MO Health Net is No Health Net.

Some lawmakers thought cutting Medicaid was the solution, but taking away healthcare from the elderly, poor and disabled in the state didn't improve the crisis, it just got us in deeper.

Finally, SB 581 will make investments in healthcare a priority over tax breaks for the rich.

Don't get me wrong, there are parts of the MO Health Net proposal contained in Senate Bill 577 that I think are steps in the right direction. For example, the measure provides incentives for people to buy long-term care insurance that protects their assets, and it provides incentives for people to show up to the doctor on time for checkups. It also encourages people to improve their health by quitting smoking or getting more exercise.

But the bill mostly deals with the process of delivering healthcare services, rather than fixing the problems with our current healthcare system.

SB 581, on the other hand, restores the ability of seniors to stay in their homes longer, it allows folks with disabilities to keep their jobs, and it reinstates access to affordable healthcare services for the children and families who lost their healthcare two years ago.

The Senate Agriculture, Conservation, Parks and Natural Resources Committee heard several bills this week on local control. These bills would take away the voice of the people and won't solve the problems associated with industrial agriculture. As I've said many times, I believe government is best when it's closest to the people it serves.

I was pleased to meet with members of Parents as Teachers, the Missouri State Teachers Association, and representatives from the Hannibal campus of Moberly Community College. I had an opportunity to listen to their concerns about the challenges facing education in Missouri, and shared with them my thoughts about making sure education remains our state's top priority.

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