



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Medicaid Hearing Leaves Many Missourians Out in the Cold

JEFFERSON CITY – This week the Senate Health and Mental Health Committee heard testimony on Senate Bill 577, the misnamed “MO HealthNet.” I inquired of the committee chairman if this was going to be the only hearing the Senate would hold to reform a six billion dollar program, and I was told it would be the only one. Public testimony was limited to three hours on a bill that dictates how six billion dollars will be spent and affects the healthcare of tens of thousands of Missourians. I know a lot of folks who traveled hours to Jefferson City and didn’t have an opportunity to testify. I am disappointed the chairman didn’t give those folks a chance to speak their minds. What’s the point of having a public hearing if the public is left out in the cold?

As I’ve mentioned before, a better way to reform our state healthcare system is contained in my legislation, Senate Bill 581. My bill restores access to healthcare to the 100,000 Missourians who lost healthcare two years ago and restores Medicaid services to the 300,000 Missourians who lost them. SB 581 restores the ability of seniors to stay in their homes longer, allows folks with disabilities to keep their jobs, and reinstates access to affordable healthcare services for the children and families who lost their healthcare two years ago. For those nearly one million people, this is NO Health Net at all. These are the most vulnerable people in our society, and my morals tell me we must take care of the least of our society

You might have heard the governor's big announcement this week that he was firing a contractor hired to do janitorial services in several state office buildings because the company was employing illegal aliens.

I chuckled when I heard this because the governor created the problem in the first place when he fired dozens of hardworking state employees who were performing these services two years ago. At the time, the governor said he was saving the state money by privatizing some janitorial services. Well, sure, you'll save money if you don't pay people reasonable wages and don't offer them health benefits. I opposed this move two years ago and am glad the governor took action to clean up a mess he created.

I successfully amended a bill that comes up every year that changes state laws regarding local city and county governments. One of my amendments will help the Monroe City School District and the other will help the Clarence Cannon Wholesale Water Commission to invest in improving and updating its infrastructure.

I was pleased to visit with a lot of folks from the district who are concerned about local control. I believe that giving up local control does **not** fix the problem – it just takes a voice away from the people and that is not the way to solve problems in Missouri. We need to be about finding sustainable ways to dispose of the manure and find solutions for odor abatement. Taking away local control is not a satisfactory solution. Rural Missourians know what is best for their communities.

Some lawmakers are trying to take away the ability of local governments to regulate industrial agriculture, but I'm going to do everything I can to stop them. Government is best when it's closest to the people.

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