



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# Senate Plays Politics

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JEFFERSON CITY – When I was elected to the Missouri Senate last November, I was looking forward to the rules and procedures of the upper chamber that allow any member to talk about an issue as long as they have something to say. That’s a lot different from the House, where the majority can cut off debate any time they want and force a vote.

Etched on the walls of the Senate chamber between portraits of Daniel Boone and Thomas Jefferson are these words, “Free and Fair Discussion Will Ever Be the Firmest Friend of Truth.” It’s one of the hallmarks of the upper chamber – the ability of a member to speak on a subject without the kind of artificial time limits that often ends debate in the House. Well, it WAS one of the hallmarks of the Senate.

This week the majority used a rare parliamentary procedure to shut off debate on the governor’s MOHELA scheme and force a vote on the plan - a plan that has changed more than 30 times over the past year and a half. It’s called “moving to the previous question,” and it basically means one side tells the other side to sit down and shut up. In the Senate, this procedure has only been attempted nine times since 1970. This week marks the second time in just two years the majority has forced its will on the Senate.

That being said, there are a few good things in Senate Bill 389 and its companion legislation House Bill 16 for the folks in my district. For example, the bill includes more than \$21-million for renovation and construction at the Pershing Building at Truman State University. It provides \$5-million for a plant science research facility in Mexico, and it includes \$2-million for the University of Missouri’s Greenley Learning and Discovery Park.

The Greenley Center was established when Hortense Greenley donated the 700-acre farm to the University of Missouri in memory of her father. The major objective of the center is to evaluate efficient, profitable crop production in northern Missouri while emphasizing soil conservation, water quality and energy efficiency. Researchers study the benefits of reduced tillage, alternative-cropping practices, the effects of new technology and products, variety testing, soil fertility and beef cattle backgrounding. Studies on water quality and the environmental impact of crop production are being implemented.

Speaking of agriculture, there have been some major developments in the local control debate. For all intents and purposes, Senate Bill 364 is dead. Some of the provisions in SB 364 were moved to SB 570, which was brought up for debate this week. During debate, the majority floor leader offered an amendment to the bill to establish an interim committee to study the issue over the summer. The Senate approved the amendment, and I plan on serving on that interim committee to make sure local governments continue to have a say in the debate over large confined animal feeding operations. I continue to believe that government that is closest to the people is best.

The federal government created this problem in the first place by allowing meatpackers to own livestock. That decision led to consolidation in the livestock industry to the point where three or four big companies own most of the livestock in the country. However, we still have more than 100,000 family farmers in Missouri, and state government should do everything in its power to help them succeed and thrive.

We received dozens and dozens of phone calls this week both in support and in opposition to the local control issue. In fact, the special interest groups on both sides of the issue have been putting so much pressure on lawmakers that a compromise seemed impossible. Moving the issue of local control to an interim committee will give everyone a chance to cool their heels and take another crack at it over the summer. I think this is a victory for local governments, for family farmers, and for agriculture in general.

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