



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

For the Week of:
Jan. 8, 2007

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Health care and Education at Top of 2007 Agenda

Each year many partake in the tradition of New Year's Resolutions. Losing weight, quitting smoking, and learning something new are just a few of the resolutions people make. With another legislative session underway, we too are starting to make some very common resolutions again. Therefore, it comes to no surprise that health care and education are at the top of the Legislature's agenda again this year.

So what will the Legislature's New Year's Resolution entail?

1. To encourage consumers to stop relying solely on expensive emergency care, watch for the Legislature to promote consumer choice, wellness and preventive care as ways to lower health-care costs for everyone. The Legislature will continue efforts to expand health-care coverage while relieving Missouri's overburdened public health system. This will continue work to meet the state's medical needs, sustain providers, and honor taxpayers.

2. The tragic fire at the Anderson Guest House near Joplin late last year raised awareness of the need for stricter safety standards at state-licensed group homes. We also realize the need for lawmakers to work on preventing abuse and neglect at all mental health facilities and to improve their safety. One measure already introduced in the Senate implements several recommendations from a task force formed to study problems at mental health centers.

3. Education at all levels will also be a top issue. The governor's plan for selling assets of the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA) to provide \$350 million for campus construction projects will see much debate, and other lawmakers are looking at entirely new ways to fund higher education.

Meanwhile, the issue of school choice for K-12 education in urban areas also will demand a lot of attention. Supporters of school choice want to allow students in underperforming districts to be able to qualify for tax credits to private schools. Opponents say the system would divert funds from public schools. I feel it is important to keep the purpose of the debate solely on what's best for all of Missouri's children, regardless of where they live.

5. In addition to these wide-ranging issues, lawmakers are also expected to address legislation dealing with illegal immigrants, establishing a prescription drug-monitoring program and setting goals for the use of renewable fuels, among other matters.

To follow these and other issues facing the Missouri Senate, visit www.senate.mo.gov. Visitors can track legislation as it passes through the General Assembly, learn more about their Senate district, or listen to streaming audio of legislative debate as it happens.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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