



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

For the Week of:
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Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Several Senate Priorities Sent to the Governor

Several high-priority issues announced by Senate and House leaders at the start of this year have been sent to the governor's desk in advance of this Friday's (5/18) close to the legislative session. Senators from both sides of the aisle worked with their colleagues in the House to pass legislation dealing with funding for elementary and secondary education, as well as a comprehensive plan to invest money into Missouri's colleges and universities. Senators also approved a measure modifying state laws regarding the use of force against an intruder. Following are just a few of the many highlights from a very successful session.

Budget

This session, the Missouri General Assembly advanced thirteen budget bills totaling \$21.4 billion and maintaining a record setting \$200 million reserve. Highlights from the budget include record amounts for education and healthcare and protections for women and children.

A strong commitment to education is reflected in the budget. The Legislature fully funded the phase-in target for the revamped Foundation Formula with all public schools sharing a \$132 million increase in funds directly to them and another \$15 million set aside specifically for small schools. Colleges and universities also saw the direct budget money to them increase 4-5 percent while measures to rein in the cost of tuition made it through as well.

Higher Education

Senate Bill 389, an omnibus higher education bill, makes universities and colleges more accessible, affordable and accountable. The measure includes the governor's *Lewis & Clark Discovery Initiative*, which will use nearly \$260 million in proceeds from the Missouri Higher

Education Loan Authority, or MOHELA, to fund 28 university and college campus building projects. The measure also limits tuition increases proposed by most public colleges and universities to the region's consumer price index (CPI). Teachers who work in unaccredited districts could receive an additional \$5,000 a year for four years and a \$1,000 stipend in the fifth year from the state. Bright Flight Scholarships have been increased from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for each student each year who tests in the top 3 percent in their college entrance exams. A new \$1,000 a year scholarship will be offered for those testing in the top 3-5 percent.

Castle Doctrine

Current state law requires people to retreat before fighting back. Senate Bill 62 allows people who have a reasonable fear of imminent peril or death to use deadly force against his or her attacker. The attacker must have unlawfully or forcefully entered the defender's dwelling or vehicle.

Lawmakers put certain safeguards in the bill, including a provision that says the defensive force may not be used against someone who has a legal right to be in the vehicle or home. The legislation also repeals the requirement that Missouri residents must get permits from their local sheriff before buying a handgun.

Other provisions in SB 62 include allowing people who have law enforcement training to skip weapons handling courses in order to get a concealed weapon permit, allowing law enforcement departments to sell confiscated weapons, and putting mental health information in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System to determine eligibility to buy guns. Twenty-five other states already have similar laws on the books.

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

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