



MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week
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New Legislation Benefits Faith-based Assistance, Education and Health care

JEFFERSON CITY — Faith, education and health care are undoubtedly some of the most important issues for the people of Southeast Missouri. I have responded to the calls from my constituents with legislation addressing these important topics. This year I have introduced legislation creating the Faith-Based Organization Liaison Act, raising higher education funding, and giving more information to employers providing health-care coverage to their workers.

Senate Bill 46 creates the Faith-Based Organization Liaison Act. It requires the Missouri Department of Social Services to designate regional employees to serve as liaisons to faith-based organizations in their regions. Liaisons will communicate with and promote faith-based organizations as a means of providing services for individuals who would otherwise require public assistance.

Under this act, Missourians in need will be better able to receive help. The state will work with faith-based organizations to expand the scope of assistance to those in need while saving taxpayer dollars by utilizing and promoting these organizations. The legislation requires that no liaison may discriminate against any faith-based organization. It will be heard next week in the Senate Committee on Seniors, Families and Public Health.

I have also filed legislation to improve funding for higher education. SB 99 increases the property value needed to be exempt from paying taxes to junior colleges. This is a simple adjustment for inflation that will have a positive impact on institutions such as Three Rivers Community College. In Missouri, junior colleges have established districts that levy taxes to help fund the institutions. Property above a certain value within these districts can qualify for tax breaks. However, inflation has allowed more and more properties to increase in value and thus qualify for tax-exempt status, which saps these important institutions of needed revenue. SB 99 will adjust the numbers to better reflect established values and revenue earnings.

Health care is of course on the minds of many Missourians, and I am introducing a measure to allow more transparency for employers providing health care to their workers. SB 100 requires health carriers to provide certain claims and financial data when requested by an employer. This would include the number of claims filed over the previous three years and the dollar amount paid for those claims. Currently, employers shopping for a health-care plan for their employees can't access this valuable information. My measure would allow these businesses to make more informed choices, which will result in lower costs for them and their workers.

These three measures provide common-sense solutions to many of the most pressing issues facing Missourians. I will work hard to see them enacted, and I appreciate your support.

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Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.