



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Committees Examining Bills Focusing on Faith, Law and Transportation

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JEFFERSON CITY — With much of the ceremonial procedures of the new legislative session out of the way, lawmakers have gotten down to hard work in committees. I am taking part in a variety of key committees, including Appropriations and Education, and several of my bills were heard by the legislative panels this week. Bills promoting faith-based organizations, extending a fund that allows access to legal services, and modifying penalties for motor vehicle violations were heard this week.

Senate Bill 46 creates the Faith-Based Organization Liaison Act, which 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 have better access to help. The state will work with faith-based organizations to expand 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. The Senate Committee on Seniors, Families and Public Health heard the bill this week.

Another measure I have filed will remove the expiration date on a program that helps fund civil legal services for low-income Missourians. SB 163 extends indefinitely the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund, which is currently set to expire Dec. 31 of this year. The fund is used to provide legal representation in civil matters to Missourians who could not otherwise afford it. This program is needed to ensure proper representation for those in need, and it enjoys broad bipartisan support. I will work hard to ensure this program is not allowed to lapse. It was heard this week by the Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee.

Finally, the Senate Transportation Committee this week heard my bill modifying numerous penalties for violations of motor vehicle licensing, registration, and equipment statutes. SB 101 changes certain violations to infraction status. For example, titling, mud-flap, spotlamp and other minor violations currently are punishable with misdemeanors that are capable of landing even responsible drivers in jail. Under my bill, they are infractions that incur fines, not criminal charges. This legislation implements punishments that fit these negligible offenses.

These are just a handful of measures lawmakers have taken up this week. I am working hard to pass them through the legislative process, and I am also dedicating a lot of time to examining bills filed by my colleagues. Together, we are serving our districts and working to improve the lives of all Missourians.

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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.*