



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Protecting Our Very Youngest, Our Very Oldest, and Picking Up the Pieces

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JEFFERSON CITY — Whether it is taking care of our very youngest, our very oldest, or helping those who have been hit by natural disasters, we as lawmakers have a responsibility to care for the citizens of our state.

Too many times we hear the heart-breaking tales of our elderly and our children being abused at the hands of the people they should be able to trust, and unfortunately, those we have entrusted to look after them. Not all of the abuse is physical. Financial exploitation of the elderly who might have saved their entire lifetimes to have enough to get through their Golden Years is as much of a crime. A bill I am sponsoring looks to strengthen the efforts to make sure these unacceptable acts do not go on unabated.

SB 490 – Protections for Vulnerable Adults and Children has passed out of the Senate's Seniors, Families and Public Health Committee and is hopefully moving toward final passage. This bill would make sure that in-home care and adult-day care providers report any suspected abuse. That reporting of abuse would include any believed misappropriation of a patient's money or property. The state Department of Health and Senior Services would also have to make a prompt and thorough investigation upon hearing of any report that indicates an imminent danger. My bill also looks to protect our youngest citizens by expanding the definition of an "in-home services client" to include children in Healthy Children and Youth (HCY) Program. In addition, SB 490 would keep anyone on the Missouri sexual offender registry from working for the state Department of Social Services.

Another issue of particular interest to the folks of Southeast Missouri is the recovery from the devastation of natural disasters including the severe storms of last year. As I'm sure you're aware, the April, 2006 tornadoes cut a swath of destruction through portions of the Bootheel, flattening large portions of the towns of Braggadocia and Caruthersville. In September, Southeast Missouri took another hit as high winds, flooding rains, and once again, tornadoes pummeled the region. The damage has been unbelievable, but the strong people of that area took no time to pity themselves and immediately set to the work of picking up the pieces. But they need some help. HB 327 and my bill, SB 706, now making their way through the legislative process, would use the Quality Jobs Act to require the Department of Economic Development to give benefits preference to qualified companies and projects in areas recently declared disaster areas by the federal government. In addition, I've introduced legislation that would allow health care professionals from outside of Missouri to come into our state in case of emergency as directed by the State Emergency Management Agency. The people of the Bootheel have the strong will and determination to rebuild after these devastating storms. Let's give them the tools to do just that.

Those are the things we're working on this week. We need to take care of those who might not be able to take care of themselves, the very young and the very old. And we need to give those hit by natural disasters everything they need so they can take care of themselves.

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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.*