



## MISSOURI SENATE

Rob Mayer  
25th Senate District

JEFFERSON CITY

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 331  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Column for the Week  
of May 21, 2007**

**Contact: Irene Murray  
(573) 751-3859**

# Of Food, Fuel, and Boll Weevils

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JEFFERSON CITY — In the closing days of the legislative session, my colleagues and I scrambled to get our priorities passed before the gavel fell for the final time. Compromise, consolidation, and concurrence ruled the day. Some of my priorities for our area focusing on the agri-business aspects of Southeast Missouri were able to make it through before we hit our 6 p.m. Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup> deadline.

On the final day of the session, I was able to garner final approval on [House Bill 741](#), which includes two important provisions for the 25<sup>th</sup> State Senatorial District. The bill has parts of my [Senate Bill 571](#), dealing with biodiesel tax credits, and [Senate Bill 387](#), the *Missouri Rice Certification Act*. In addition, we've once again funded a program that works to get rid of a scourge for Southeast Missouri cotton growers, the boll weevil.

Getting your fuel costs under control is a big priority for me. Just look at the skyrocketing prices of gas and diesel these days at the pumps, and you know why it was important to get biodiesel tax credit reforms passed this year. The new rules we passed allows refiners to get state tax credits even if they use raw materials from out of state. Previously, they could only collect on certain credits if they got their feedstocks, typically soybeans, from sources inside the state. Too many times, that meant refiners in the Bootheel would have to get their materials from Northwest Missouri, nearly 500 miles away... while perfectly good soybeans and soybean oils would be just a few miles over the state line. The change will allow them to get their inputs from their neighbors across the Missouri border, making biodiesel much more

economically viable. Total state general revenues dedicated to encourage the production of the environmentally-friendly fuel will be more than \$21.5 million in Fiscal Year 2008.

Provisions of the *Missouri Rice Certification Act* will create an advisory council. The committee will consist of nine members including the director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, two members appointed by the director representing rice handlers and end users, and six members recommended by the Missouri Rice Research and Merchandising Council. These six include producers, university scientists, and representatives of rice mills and seed dealers. Rice has been a longtime staple for farmers in Southeast Missouri, and I'm glad we'll be able to formalize efforts to promote this product to the nation and the world.

In addition, we've put more than \$500,000 into the state's boll weevil eradication program, trying to eliminate an insect that costs Missouri cotton producers more than \$7 million a year in crop loss and pesticide use.

Agriculture is a major business our district, and I'm glad the legislature recognized this year how vital it really is, not only in providing the food we need, but also the fuel to keep our literal and economic engines going.

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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.*