



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Productive Session Ends

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JEFFERSON CITY — This past Wednesday, May 30<sup>th</sup> marked the official end of the 2007 legislative session. Lawmakers wrapped their formal work in the actual chambers on May 18<sup>th</sup>, and now we're spending more time back in our districts working with constituents to craft next year's legislation.

For me, I think it was a particularly good session with a high number of priorities for you and me being passed and sent to the governor either in their original form or incorporated into other bills. There's a lot of legislation that starts a session but few make it to the end. Out of about 2000 bills considered in both the House and Senate this year, only 133 made final passage. The average that ends up on the governor's desk after any session is less than 10 percent. So when several of our priorities make it all the way through, I'm especially happy, because, as you can see, that puts us at better than the average.

One of those priorities that just made it all the way through the process was Senate Bill 127, which evens out some retirement options for all members of the Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees' Retirement System (MPERS), including those who aren't uniformed officers. In addition, we've added another member to the board of trustees for MPERS meaning there will be two retirees, one from the transportation department and one from the civilian or uniformed Highway Patrol. I'm glad Governor Blunt this week has affixed his signature to this change, and it is the law of the land.

I've previously told you about how we were able to pass my legislation helping biodiesel producers in Southeast Missouri - and around the state for that matter - and the rice farmers of

my district. We also passed my measures addressing the role of faith-based organizations in our social services arena and not-for-profit organizations providing services for our state parks. I'm also proud to have pushed through legislation that will help the Bootheel recover from the tornadoes and severe thunderstorms of last year.

Two of my bills that we haven't discussed before that received final passage during the last week of session and await the governor's signature are [Senate Bill 198](#), dealing with crimes in or near state parks, and [Senate Bill 163](#), regarding the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund.

Senate Bill 198 makes it a crime to distribute controlled substances near a park. Drug pushers who try to deal heroin, cocaine, LSD, amphetamines, or methamphetamines within a thousand feet of a park would be charged with a Class A felony. Drugs have long been a scourge that we need to make every effort to eradicate. I believe this measure will just give us one more avenue to keep them away from our citizens, and especially our families who want to get away from it all.

Senate Bill 163 continues for five more years the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund, which was set to expire at the end of this year. Passage of this measure ensures that the state legal services program will be able to help individuals get their lawful state benefits. It also makes sure low-income Missourians, especially children, families, the elderly, and those victims of domestic violence, have equal access to the civil justice system.

When you think about the thousands of needs and the hundreds of worthy bills that were introduced this past year to help meet those needs, my bills along with the others that did make it to the governor's desk don't seem to cover everything that needed to be done. But I can tell you we have another chance in front of us when we gather for the next regular session, and hopefully, that one will also be better than average.

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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.*