



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Harvest Time

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JEFFERSON CITY — This is my favorite time of year. High school football is in full swing, a cooler breeze fills the air, and our hard-working farmers are bringing in the crops that started out as just seeds only a few months ago. This year, even though most of my district experienced a severe drought, our farmers have gotten a little help from above, and it looks like they'll haul in a great harvest for their many months of work.

As I said, most of Southeast Missouri was hit by severe drought this summer. In fact, it was so bad that the Governor has asked for the federal government to declare all of the counties in the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District agricultural disaster areas. I fully support this call and hope the feds will see just how hard the drought has been on our farmers.

The corn harvest is nearly completed in our area. Although it's been dry a large portion of this year, lots of expensive irrigation and some timely rains have ensured that a bountiful corn crop has been harvested with estimated average yields higher than a year ago. In addition to the bigger average yields, Southeast Missouri farmers have put 75 percent more acres into corn. As a result, we're seeing the overall corn harvest nearly double what it was just one year ago. It's a good thing we have that extra corn because with the desire to shake our dependence on foreign oil increasing everyday, we're seeing more and more ethanol plants going up throughout the state. That includes the new one under development just down the road in Sikeston.

Meanwhile, as the corn acres grew, soybean acreage dropped in Southeast Missouri (often replaced by the corn acres). Not surprisingly, combining the fewer acres with the drought conditions, the overall soybean harvest (about two-thirds completed) is down. That is why it is good that we passed a provision this year that will allow biodiesel producers in the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District (and across the state, for that matter) to bring in soybeans as feedstock for biodiesel from farms just across the border, as opposed to importing them (at great cost) from the far corners of Missouri, and still receive state credits. That's great news for the folks at the

refineries in Hayti and Dexter who are working hard to provide more markets for our agricultural products while helping lift the yoke of foreign oil.

Our rice and cotton crops are nearly done being harvested... about a month ahead of schedule, and all is looking good for those crops as well. Winter wheat is being planted at a brisk pace with more than half completed, and once it has been harvested in early spring the cycle can begin all over again. The constant year-round effort that is put forth by our hard-working farmers is to be greatly appreciated, as the work they do feeds, clothes, and now fuels our great nation.

Lastly, while all this farm equipment is moving from field to field, I want to remind drivers to slow down and be on the lookout for the slower-moving harvest wagons, trucks, tractors, and combines that share our roads. Farmers work a long day with some heavy equipment, and I want to make sure that you're aware that around that blind curve or over the next hilltop, someone with a much larger vehicle could be moving at a pace slower than yours. Please take your time and watch out. It will only be a truly successful harvest if everyone makes it home safely.

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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.*