



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 221
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
Week of Jan. 08, 2007**

**Contact: Debbie Poiré
(573) 751-8793**

Starting Again in Jefferson City

JEFFERSON CITY – Early every January, 197 men and women from across the state of Missouri get into their cars or pickups and make a very special trip - a trip to start the new legislative session. State representatives and senators of every size, age, occupational background and party join a common caravan, loaded with personal belongings, to move into apartments, motel rooms or sleeping quarters. Some arrive in old beat up jalopies that look like they can barely run, others in shiny new sports vehicles, and some come in their farm trucks which have not yet seen a car wash to remove the evidence of the last time the cows were hauled to market. There is always excitement in the packing and planning, but the real thrill comes as you turn the corner onto High Street and look at the majestic state Capitol where you are privileged to have a temporary office.

My first experience was a bit different than most as I was elected in a special election on June 11, 1985. The election resulted from a vacancy in my district. I was chosen to be the candidate by the local county committee rather than running in a primary. The campaign itself lasted only seven weeks. In those years the legislature adjourned on June 15 on the odd years and on April 30 on even years.

It was late evening on June 11 when the election results were finalized and at 4 p.m. the next day, June 12, I was sworn into office by then Speaker of the House Bob Griffin. There was no time for fancy celebrations. The legislature briefly stopped its hectic deliberations of the final week, I was sworn in and shown to my temporary seat in the chamber, and the debate resumed.

Within five minutes of my swearing in, I voted for the first time as a full member of the House of Representatives. I knew nothing about any issue the legislature had been debating for the previous six months. I relied on other rural representatives, like Ken Legan of Halfway or Tim Kelly of Savannah, to guide me in those first votes. I had three full days of a quick education before the legislature adjourned for the year. Two of my fellow representatives that year were Jim Talent and Claire McCaskill.

That first evening I left the Capitol alone. My family had gone home and I was ready to go to my temporary place of lodging. I remember sitting in my car on that hot June evening and staring in awe at our beautiful Capitol building, awash in lights, trying to comprehend that I, who eight weeks prior had not even considered running for legislative office, was here, elected, and now had an office in that beautiful building.

Each year is different. Some years I would load my mattress and box springs on top of the family station wagon and deliver it to my sleeping room. Some years I shared a furnished apartment with other representatives.

In 1986, I and the two state reps mentioned above had decided to room together and one had asked his secretary to find a cheap apartment for us. She was successful in the cheap part! When it rained in our second floor apartment, the water would leak through our kitchen ceiling, through our floor and soak the residents who lived on the first floor. The first floor Doberman pincher dog would welcome us with loud barks each evening as we began our climb up the second floor stairway!

For two years during the late 1980's I took my wife and family to Jefferson City for the legislative session. While it was a great experience for the kids, it turned out to be a huge amount of work for their mother who hauled laundry back and forth, as well as food and school work. I am glad we did it but we soon realized that it wasn't very practical. The heavy burden associated with legislators is born by the spouse and children. Typically the family works as a team during the campaign but then Dad (or Mom) goes off to serve in Jefferson City and the work of maintaining a household, disciplining children, and working through everyday challenges is left to the spouse at home. Unfortunately, some couples don't make the pull.

This week I started my 23rd legislative session, 18 in the House and now five in the Senate. I stopped for a few seconds as I turned from High Street toward our beautiful Capitol. The Christmas wreath was still hanging above Thomas Jefferson's statue. The 30-foot bronze doors of the capitol were open, giving a glimpse of the majestic grand staircase leading to the rotunda.

Now there are security blockades preventing us from driving through the carriage entrance and a guard building to limit who can drive into the basement. But none of that diminishes the beauty and the awe of the Capitol, nor the thrill of the first day of session, nor the privilege that I have of representing you in the Missouri Senate. Thank you!

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.