



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Spring Recess

JEFFERSON CITY – With the General Assembly adjourning for a week for the annual Spring Recess, I thought it would be a good time to review some of the progress we've made during the first half of the legislative session.

One of the most important issues facing lawmakers this year is changing our state healthcare system. The old Medicaid system was bankrupting our state but, even more importantly, the old system was failing our most vulnerable citizens. The changes lawmakers made saved Medicaid and set the state on a course to dramatically improve care for the sick and the poor. With the advice and suggestions of thousands of Missourians, MO HealthNet was developed to replace the old Medicaid system.

MO HealthNet recognizes that Missourians should all have one central point of contact and a doctor who knows them personally. The proposal provides this access by empowering participants to choose their health care home. Participants will also have access to a health risk assessment to develop a plan of care for improved health and, help to avoid unnecessary emergency room visits and unnecessary hospitalizations.

Perhaps most importantly, MO HealthNet will empower the participants to make their own health care choices. MO HealthNet will significantly expand the number of participants who are allowed to choose their own health plan or to purchase health insurance. MO HealthNet is not just about reforming the old system but creating an entirely new system to deliver health care services to low-income Missourians. The old Medicaid was about sickness. The new MO HealthNet will be about prevention and wellness.

On a related note, the Senate this week gave final approval to Senate Bill 16, the Childcare Vision Act. The goal of this act is to ensure detection of any eye disease or disorder at a more treatable age. SB 16 presents an opportunity to correct many vision problems in order to prevent a student from getting a bad start in school due to poor eyesight. The brain's vision system is mature when a child reaches eight to ten years of age. That's why it's important to have children's eyes checked early to assure they have the best vision possible. The act will establish channels for those who cannot afford an eye exam to receive assistance. It's our goal to identify these kids at an early age and get them to where they are not held back, while preventing eye damage as they grow up.

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.