



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Bill to Help Sheltered Workshops Sent to Governor

JEFFERSON CITY – Having served more than 20 years in the Missouri General Assembly, one thing I have learned is it takes a lot of patience to see an idea to fruition. Even good ideas supported by many often take years to work their way through the legislative process. Such is the case with a bill I have sponsored for several years to increase payments to Missouri's 93 sheltered workshops. This year that legislation was finally approved and has been sent to the governor.

Sheltered workshops are non-profit small businesses which employ people who are deemed to be unable to work in a competitive work environment due to mental retardation, head injury, blindness, deafness and other physical or mental disabilities. Some of the jobs that disabled people are contracted to perform include assembling and packaging products, sorting and stuffing mail, janitorial duties and grounds maintenance.

The operating costs for the state's sheltered workshops tend to be higher than other small businesses because they rely on contracted work and the revenue it generates. Sheltered workshops also offer increased supervision of employees, adding to overhead costs.

House Bill 352, which contains the language I've been offering for the past three sessions, will increase funding for each sheltered workshop to \$75 per week and \$15 per day for work performed by handicapped employees in the 2008 fiscal year. The funding will continue to increase until 2011 when the workshops will receive \$95 per week and \$19 per day per employee.

Missouri's well-run sheltered workshops employ nearly 8,000 disabled people and close to 900 non-disabled individuals. They contribute greatly to the state's commerce and to the well-being of the communities they serve. This legislation will help ensure the positive effects of sheltered workshops will continue.

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.mo.gov.

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