



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Special Session to Tackle Bridge Improvements, Economic Development

JEFFERSON CITY – Governor Matt Blunt and the leaders of the Missouri House and Senate have agreed to call a special session of the legislature to speed implementation of the Safe and Sound Bridge Improvement Program and to pass an economic development package. Lawmakers will convene the special session August 20.

The tragic collapse of the Interstate 35W Bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis on August 1st prompted transportation officials in Missouri and other states to re-examine the safety of their bridges. Missouri already had been moving forward with the Safe and Sound Bridge Improvement Program to repair or replace more than 800 Missouri bridges. However, legislative changes are needed to allow contractors to access bonds needed for the projects. Bonds for the bridge program will help protect taxpayers by ensuring the work is completed by the contractors who fix and replace the bridges. Without a legislative fix, no contractors would be able to obtain the required bonds which would prevent the program from continuing to move forward.

Lawmakers also are being asked to address the need for an economic development package that includes an expansion of the Quality Jobs Act. The package would allow the Quality Jobs initiative to create even more family-supporting jobs by increasing its capacity from \$12 million to \$40 million. The package also would increase the Enhanced Enterprise Zone capacity from \$7 million to \$14 million and create a new state match for the federal New Markets tax credit which brings investment to economically distressed areas of the state.

The Quality Jobs Act is one of the most important economic development tools we have to create jobs with good wages and health care benefits. The act is credited with helping to provide more than 12,000 good-paying jobs with benefits to Missourians. By expanding the program's cap we will be encouraging businesses to hire more Missourians.

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.us.

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