



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott  
28<sup>th</sup> Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the  
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**Contact: Debbie Poiré  
(573) 751-8793**

# New Authority for Nurses Would Improve Health Care

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JEFFERSON CITY – In many rural areas of Missouri, where it can be difficult to find a hospital or a doctor, advanced practice nurses often handle the routine health care needs of local citizens. I plan to sponsor legislation giving advance practice registered nurses (APRNs) greater authority to dispense medications and other controlled substances, as long as certain conditions are met.

Senate Bill 724 authorizes APRNs to prescribe schedule II, III, IV or V controlled substances. Forty-six other states have given their APRN's this authority. In other words, when you go in to see the doctor, these qualified professionals would be allowed to prescribe the medicines you need. This is extremely important in rural and urban environments. APRNs with prescriptive authority would be able to supplement the shortage of doctors in rural areas. This new authority would also allow quicker treatment to patients when doctors are unavailable in medically underserved areas, both urban and rural.

This legislation is also needed to correct an inadvertent consequence of an anti-methamphetamine measure passed in 2005. That bill prohibited the over-the-counter sale of medicines containing pseudoephedrine, an element commonly used to make meth. Now customers must go to the pharmacy to obtain these medicines, which are used to treat cold and allergy symptoms. However, the legislation implementing this new law unfortunately contained language prohibiting APRNs from writing prescriptions for medicines containing pseudoephedrine. This oversight needs to be corrected.

Another important element of this legislation is that doctors can retain oversight of the APRNs' new prescriptive authorities. The bills require collaborative practice agreements among doctors and nurses, so doctors can restrict nurses' prescribing capabilities if they so choose. In other words, doctors retain their ability to oversee the actions of APRNs.

For the sake of patients throughout our state, we need to catch up to the rest of the nation on this issue. Approving this measure would be one small step toward more affordable, efficient health care delivery.

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](mailto: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.*