



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



Room 433 - State Capitol Bldg. - Jefferson City, MO 65101 – Contact Barbara Mustoe Phone: (573) 751-2306

Week of Feb. 26, 2007

A Legacy for Learning

A tuition assistance program I am advancing this year is making swift progress in the legislative process. The bill (SB 254) was heard this week by the Senate Education Committee, giving me the unique opportunity of testifying on the merits of a bill I drafted before a panel I have the privilege of chairing.

At the center of the plan is the establishment of the Legacy Fund, which would be initiated and grown by interest money earned on unclaimed property held by the state. This activity is projected to raise some \$2.5 million annually. Money from the Legacy Fund would then be awarded as matching grants to low- and middle-income families participating in “MOST,” the state’s tax-free college tuition savings plan. The entire initiative incurs no added cost to taxpayers, while helping make a college education available to their children.

Administered by the state treasurer’s office, the MOST program (MO for Missouri and Saving for Tuition makes the acronym) has some 90,000 active accounts at this writing, representing nearly \$1 billion in funds invested for college tuition by families all across the state. Although a number of variables factor in, it’s possible for a modest \$10 per month savings plan started at birth, combined with the Legacy Fund incentive and other program rewards, to generate \$30,000 by the time the child was ready for college.

College isn’t for everyone, but I believe that college should be available to everyone, and that those wanting to pursue higher education should not be turned away by economic roadblocks. Numerous studies, reports and analyses continually demonstrate that more people furthering their education means more people realizing their dreams, all while advancing the state’s productivity gains and economic strength.

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The MOST program (a “529” plan in federal IRS-speak) is proving to be a very effective way for parents to set aside money for their children’s college, and the Legacy Fund will serve as an added incentive to those now participating, and an added catalyst to get started for those who’ve not yet begun.

Committee approval of my tuition assistance initiative moves the proposal to the Senate floor for debate by the full body. Senate approval moves the Legacy Fund – which early on built significant bi-partisan support – to the House for similar consideration, and joint Senate/House approval sends the measure to the governor’s desk, where a signature will finalize the steps in making college more accessible to more Missourians.

You’ll find more information on MOST online at: www.treasurer.mo.gov

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*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*