

For Immediate Release  
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# SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

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Issues and Comments – 33<sup>rd</sup> Senatorial District

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*Senator*

***Chuck Purgason***

The current Medicaid program is scheduled to end June 30, 2008. A bill introduced in the Senate last week would replace this program with an entirely new system called MO HealthNet.

MO HealthNet will introduce a radical change in the health program in that it changes the focus from simply treating symptoms to emphasizing wellness and prevention. Each person enrolled in the system will have a healthcare advocate. This is intended to help the individual get the medical attention he or she needs while at the same time cutting down the number of unnecessary emergency room visits, which, in turn will help lower the cost of the program.

The proposed bill would also set up a reward system for recipients working to improve their health. There will be various ways to earn points that would transfer to credits on debit cards that can be used for co-pays, prescription drugs and other related health expenses.

Bills have been introduced in both branches of the legislature that would change the laws regarding defensive use of force. The House Bills have now passed to the Senate and are awaiting assignment to committee.

Under current state law, if a person is climbs through your window, as long as he doesn't come after you, all you can do is watch. The proposed legislation would remove the requirement to retreat. On-duty police officers are exempted in these bills as are homeowners engaged in illegal activities during the break-in.

In the Senate, my bill on this subject (Senate Bill 41) has been combined with Senate Bill 62 and is now on the Senate Calendar for Perfection.

Also in the Senate this week a bill was approved that would restrict the use of automated telephone calls. More than 600 consumers complained about automated political phone calls in the weeks before the November 2006 elections. Upon passage of the bill, the state's no-call list would be expanded to include "robo-calls" as well as cell phones, text messages and faxes. I have had constituents say that a night before an election, that they had received up to ten "robo-

calls” in one night. This is not only annoying but an invasion of one’s time to spend with family.

In the November 2006 elections, the voters of Missouri changed the minimum wage law in our state. In an unforeseen turn of events, this change put police and fire departments across the state on the hook for millions of dollars in unexpected overtime costs.

The Senate gave approval last week to a bill that restores the references to the federal overtime exceptions. Fire departments often use 24-hour shifts and many police departments and sheriff’s departments use 10- or 12-hour shifts that result in employees working more than 40 hours per week. The law voted on in November states that employees have to be paid overtime after 40 hours per week with no exceptions. The bill passed by the Senate lets police work up to 171 hours and firefighters up to 212 hours in a 28-day work period without earning overtime.

The bill now goes to the House. If it passes there and is signed by the Governor, it will take effect immediately.

I welcome your opinions and suggestions. You may reach me at 573-751-1882, e-mail to [chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov](mailto:chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov), or write to me at the Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101. If you would like to receive these newsletters electronically, please call or e-mail my office.

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