

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***

Senate Bill 389, a bill that modifies a number of provisions related to higher education and the powers of the Missouri Higher Education Authority (MOHELA) came to the Senate Floor for debate this week. MOHELA provides low-cost loans to students for college education. While there are other issues in SB 389, MOHELA was definitely the focus of debate. This is the issue that led to a filibuster that started around 5:00 p.m. on Monday and lasted all night until around 11:00 a.m. the Tuesday morning.

The point of contention is the Governor's plan to sell off \$350 million of MOHELA assets to use for construction projects on campuses across the state. Most of this money would be raised by selling off loans of students that do not live in Missouri. There seem to be two points that have had legislators voicing displeasure with the bill.

First, some have complained that the University of Missouri system will reap the lion's share of the revenues while they are the institution that utilizes MOHELA the least. Under the latest breakdown the MU system would receive almost \$147 million while our own Missouri State University would receive less than \$35 million. This problem is compounded due to the opposition of the Senator that represents the MU campus.

Second, the original plan called for construction of a life sciences facility at MU. This was a cause of concern for many of those opposed to stem cell research. Life science projects were removed from the bill in an attempt to draw the support of the pro-life community.

This same move, however, provoked the ire again of the senator representing the main campus of MU. When the new list of projects was released by the Governor's office eliminating human life science research the die was cast and the filibuster began.

Another problem the bill faced was that the \$350 million would have passed through the Missouri Development Finance Board. The board would then have processed the money to the campuses. Because of legal concerns and the lack of oversight from the legislature, the bill was changed so that the money would go directly to the state, a line item would be created in our state budget. This would allow all construction projects to go through the budget process. The

mission statement of MOHELA would also be changed in the statutes to authorize spending the money on campus projects that had passed through the budget process.

As mentioned before, the bill does address other issues. One portion would limit university tuition increases. Increases would be tied to the rate of inflation with those schools whose tuition is already higher than average limited to increases no greater than the rate of inflation unless granted an exception. Those schools with lower than average tuition could raise tuition at a slightly higher rate.

Another portion of the bill would take the state's two main financial-needs-based scholarship programs and roll them into one new scholarship program called the Access Missouri Financial Assistance Fund.

Also addressed in the bill is a requirement that the state Department of Higher Education develop five performance standards for universities. Three of the performance standards would be statewide measures and two would vary by institution.

The bill has been laid over on the Senate Calendar and should be debated again in the near future.

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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