

For Immediate Release

April 12, 2007

SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

Your Missouri Senate has continued work on Medicaid reform and Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) legislation. Both subjects have drawn considerable attention from supporters and detractors.

The current Medicaid system in Missouri is set to expire in 2008. Contained in the legislation that set the sunset deadline was also a provision requiring a replacement system. A committee comprised of senators and representatives held hearings throughout the state to gather ideas as to what the new program should look like. Working with Governor Matt Blunt, the results of these hearings were drafted into Senate Bill 577.

The primary sponsor of the legislation is Senator Charles Shields (R-St. Joseph). Senator Shields was chairman of the research committee and is also Majority Floor Leader. As Floor Leader he sets the agenda of the bills that will be considered by the Senate for debate. When not tending to public service, Senator Shields is employed by his local hospital, bringing first hand experience to the debate.

The fact that a member of Senate Leadership is handling the bill demonstrates the high priority given to the legislation this Session. When comprehensive reform of such a complicated program as Medicaid takes place, there is going to be much discussion. Many issues only affect a certain area of the state or a certain group of people. As a result, not every legislator feels the need to engage on every topic. Health care however, affects all citizens of the state. As such, all legislators have a stake in this debate.

The underlying concept of SB 577 is to place a greater emphasis on wellness, prevention, and personal responsibility in an effort to make the most efficient use of tax dollars. At this writing, the bill has been second read in the House and is awaiting an assignment to committee.

Legislation regarding CAFO's appears to be sitting in the Senate for now. After a supposed compromise was reached between the Missouri Association of Counties and Missouri Farm Bureau the bill has not been brought back up for debate. Under the new draft, county commissioners will still retain some control over the largest feeding operations while others will

be subject only to regulation from the state. This compromise comes after several hours of contentious debate by the members. It is uncertain if or when this bill will be brought back up for debate.

I welcome your opinions and suggestions. You may reach me at 573-751-1882, e-mail to 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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