



Jason Crowell
State Senator
27th District

September 2008

The Crowell Connection



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Senator Jason Crowell

We have concluded another successful and productive session.

Our focus has been on several legislative priorities to make Missouri a better place to live, work, and raise a family. We successfully reformed Missouri's property tax system so that residents are no longer being taxed out of their homes. We also passed strong illegal immigration prohibitions.

I am proud to announce that our K-12 schools in Missouri will receive a \$121 million increase this year, which brings the total increases over the past four years to \$499 million.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve Southeast Missouri as your state Senator.



Jason meets with superintendents from schools throughout Southeast Missouri. He serves the people of Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott counties.

On the Web: www.senate.mo.gov/crowell

State Senator Jason Crowell

Stopping Illegal Immigration

Protecting Missouri Jobs and Services

Illegal immigration creates a problem in our state because it threatens the job security and essential services available for Missourians. This year, we passed House Bill 1549, which makes Missouri's stance on illegal immigration clear: zero tolerance.

Missourians cannot afford to wait for Washington to act on the issue of illegal immigration. House Bill 1549 makes sure that Missouri is making comprehensive reforms to fight illegal immigration.

-Sen. Jason Crowell

Denying Driver's Licenses

Allowing those in this country illegally to receive a driver's license wrongly validates their residency in this country. An initiative I sponsored will block illegal immigrants from obtaining a driver's license from Missouri. The bill also specifies that a driver's license issued to an illegal immigrant in another state will not be valid in Missouri.

Making Sure Municipalities Don't Become Safe-Havens

While some cities throughout the nation have adopted policies that would give illegal immigrants sanctuary, Missouri will make it clear that this practice is not to be tolerated. This legislation prohibits municipalities within our state from granting sanctuary to illegal immigrants. Any city, town, or village that does adopt such a policy will not be able to receive any state grants.

Cutting Illegal Immigrants from Our Welfare Rolls

Our state provides public benefits such as housing assistance, food assistance, or unemployment for struggling Missourians. This legislation requires public assistance recipients to prove residency before receiving any benefits. The bill works to make sure that illegal immigrants in Missouri are not able to collect public benefits.

Detaining and Deporting Illegal Immigrants

The bill also allows law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of anyone arrested or detained in our state. Jailed individuals who cannot prove legal residency will be denied bail. Also, the State Highway Patrol will receive training to enforce illegal immigration laws.



Protecting Missouri Jobs

Employers are barred from employing illegal immigrants. Any businesses that continue to do so will be subject to the suspension of their business permits and licenses. Violators under contract with the state will have their contracts voided and be barred from contracting with the state for three years. Contractors that continue to violate the measure will be permanently barred from contracting with the state. The bill also requires employers on state contracts or using state grants, loans or tax credits to participate in a federal work authorization program in order to be eligible for state contracts. Public employers will also be required to participate in the program. The new law also applies to general contractors and subcontractors and makes them potentially liable for instances when fraudulent hiring practices are used.

Stopping Unexpected Increases

Many of us are facing hardships from unexpected tax increases due to reassessments. Senate Bill 711 protects taxpayers from “back door” tax increases by mandating tax roll backs, closing loopholes, informing taxpayers, and expanding tax relief to seniors and the disabled.

Every two years, your county assessor’s office conducts a reassessment, which determines the value of your property and the property tax liability for you. These reassessments are supposed to make sure that homes are being valued accurately—no raise taxes beyond the inflation rate.

Mandatory Rollbacks

Taxing entities (libraries, schools, cities, counties, etc.) are constitutionally required to lower (roll back) their maximum tax levy if an area’s assessed value increases more than the rate of inflation. However, if the entity did not levy their maximum tax levy in the year before reassessment, they may not have to roll back their tax rate in the reassessment year. Senate Bill 711’s mandatory rollbacks require entities to rollback taxes if revenue rises higher than the rate of inflation, regardless of whether they are taxing at their rate ceiling.

Also, beginning spring of 2011, counties in Southeast Missouri will be required to send taxpayers a projected tax liability to help prepare homeowners to pay their tax bill in December or appeal if necessary. This keeps homeowners from being caught off-guard when their tax bill arrives.

➔ **Property tax reform will help prevent Southeast Missouri families from being taxed out of their homes.**

To see if you are eligible for a Property Tax Credit check out <http://dor.mo.gov/tax/personal/ptc/proptax.pdf> or call (573) 751-3505



↑ **Expanding the Property Tax Credit program helps more seniors afford their property taxes.**

Help for Seniors

An important program in our state helps elderly and disabled residents who might have trouble paying taxes on their homes. The Property Tax Credit Claim program allows these residents to receive a credit on their tax bill for the property taxes or rent that they have paid over the past year. Senate Bill

711 increases assistance from \$750 to \$1,100 for senior and disabled homeowners. The income eligibility for homeowners also increases from \$27,500 to \$30,000 for singles and from \$29,500 to \$34,000 for married couples. This part of the legislation works to ensure that no one in this state has to struggle to afford a place to live — especially not our seniors.



Welcome Visitors

Jerry Bremmer (far right) came to the Capitol with a chapter of YEA from Scott County Central on March 3.



Perryville Farm Bureau students visited with Jason in his office on March 27.



On March 24, Janet Heady, a teacher from Alma Schrader, received this Senate Resolution from Jason honoring her retirement.



Representatives from the Alzheimers' Association in Cape Girardeau met with Jason on March 12.



Dr. Bob Fox, Dr. Shannon Kirchoff, and Dr. Terry Spence, dentists from Southeast Missouri, meet with Jason on May 6.



Jason met with Miss Missouri Outstanding Teen Mary Bauer of Cape Girardeau and her family on May 14.



Missouri's Balanced Budget

We crafted Missouri's \$22.4 billion budget in a fiscally responsible manner. We were able to expand important programs while staying within our means **without implementing any job-killing tax increases!**

Increases for Missouri's Higher Education

Higher education received a 7.8 percent increase in funding for a total of \$1.2 billion. The budget includes a \$2 million increase for Southeast Missouri State University for a total of \$48.6 million. In addition to this funding, two satellite campuses will receive money for construction and renovations. The Perryville Higher Education Center receives \$420,000 and Southeast Missouri State University-Sikeston receives \$400,000.

Another important increase for higher education is a \$48.7 million increase to the Access Missouri Scholarship Program for a total of \$91.5 million in funding. This is a program we created last year to help more Missouri students pursue a higher education.

Funding for fiscal year 2009 allows more students in Missouri to pursue a quality higher education.



Benefits for K-12 Education

This year's budget contains a \$121.2 million increase for elementary and secondary education. Schools in Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott counties will receive a 3.74 percent increase over last year's funding, for a total of \$75 million.

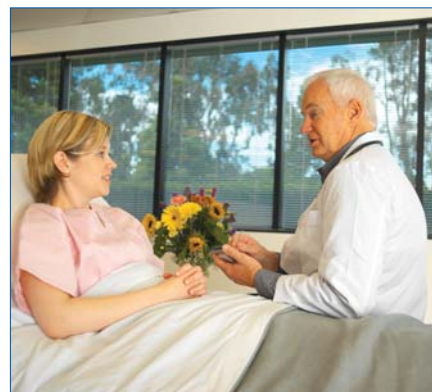
Schools in Southeast Missouri will receive a 3.74 percent funding increase.

Last year, 219 students in our area utilized the A+ Schools program, and even more students will benefit from a \$3.5 million increase. As of December 2007, 286 children in Southeast Missouri were using the Early Childhood Special Education Program. The budget includes a \$2.5 million increase for this program.

Healthcare for Missourians

Missouri's state-funded healthcare system serves more than 850,000 residents. This year's funding consists of \$3.6 billion in federal funding and \$3.2 billion in state and other funds. This includes \$5.8 million to meet increased demand for the MO HealthNet Home and Community-Based Services Program as well as a \$334.4 million increase for the MO HealthNet Program.

An additional \$13 million will go towards providing healthcare access to low-income women. The State Children's Health Insurance Program will receive \$4.8 million to expand coverage to children throughout our state.



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Funding for Autism Research and Treatment

There are more than 32,000 Missourians who have been diagnosed with autism, and the number of children and families affected by the disorder continues to grow. It is the sixth-most common disability and the second most prevalent developmental disability in our country. The fight against autism can be won with treatment, research, and education. We have continued to increase funding for autism related programs and support resources for Southeast Missouri families with a \$11.6 million increase in funding since 2006.

Autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) are a group of developmental disabilities defined by significant impairments in social interaction and communication and the presence of unusual behaviors and interests.

The Tailor Institute

We secured \$200,000 for the Tailor Institute, an organization in Cape Girardeau that works with those who have been diagnosed with autism on the high-functioning spectrum, allowing them to reach their full potential. We have been able to secure this funding for their important work since 2006 for a total of \$600,000 in funding.

Living independently and obtaining employment are just some of the goals that can be achieved through the Tailor Institute's work.



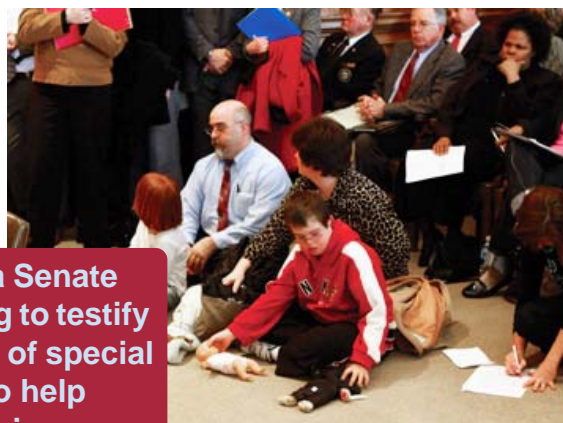
Jason participates in the ribbon cutting for the Judevine Center in Cape Girardeau.



Jason received an appreciation award from the Missouri Statewide Autism Advisory Committee and the Tailor Institute.

The Southeast Missouri Autism Center

We secured \$2.6 million in 2007 for the Southeast Missouri Autism Center. This center, the first of its kind in Southeast Missouri, will help families that once had to travel as far as Columbia, St. Louis, or Kansas City for treatment. The Southeast Missouri Autism Center will be a destination where young children with autism can go to receive high-quality diagnostic and treatment services. The center will also employ a multi-disciplinary team, where today's and tomorrow's professionals can go to receive the best training available in the region and where state-of-the-art intervention research is conducted. This year we secured \$494,000 for the Southeast Missouri Autism Center's annual operating budget.



Families came to a Senate committee meeting to testify on the importance of special needs programs to help children in Missouri.



The flags will be flown at half staff any time a Missouri resident is killed in combat.

Honoring Those Who Give the Ultimate Sacrifice

When a military member makes the ultimate sacrifice for their country, we all mourn. In order to show our appreciation for Missouri residents who give their lives for the good of our country, we passed Senate Bill 806. This bill requires that U.S. and Missouri flags be flown at half-staff for one full day whenever a Missouri resident is killed in combat.

For Missouri's Returning Heroes

We also passed Senate Bill 830, known as the Missouri Returning Heroes Act. The bill caps tuition at state-funded universities to \$50 a credit hour for veterans who served after September 11, 2001.

Veterans have 10 years after their honorable discharge to enroll in the program and must maintain a 2.5 or higher grade-point average while taking classes. The bill gives veterans an opportunity to expand their chances in the job market by pursuing a degree with less worry about the cost of college tuition.

Although, many returning veterans utilize the GI Bill to pay for their higher education, but the federal program only provides a flat monthly rate for veterans. This leaves many unable to afford their tuition, room and board. During the spring 2008 semester, 147 veterans were using the GI Bill to help pay for their higher education at Southeast Missouri State University—a number that is fairly low compared to previous years due to the amount of military students that are currently deployed. As veterans return from combat, more will be able to pursue a higher education more affordably. By lessening the financial burden of tuition to \$50 a credit hour, these veterans would be able to manage the cost of necessities without struggling to make ends meet.

Returning veterans only need to pay \$50 a credit hour at state public colleges and universities.



Remembering the Fallen

The following are names of military members from Southeast Missouri who lost their lives in Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom:

Staff Sergeant Charles R. Sanders, Jr. of Charleston: April 6, 2005

Sergeant Robert G. Davis of Jackson: August 18, 2005

Specialist Blake W. Hall of East Prairie: August 21, 2005

Corporal Jeremy Shank of Jackson: September 6, 2006

Staff Sergeant Bradley J. Skelton of Gordonville: February 6, 2008

Sergeant Adam J. Kohlhaas of Perryville: April 21, 2008



The Gift of Life

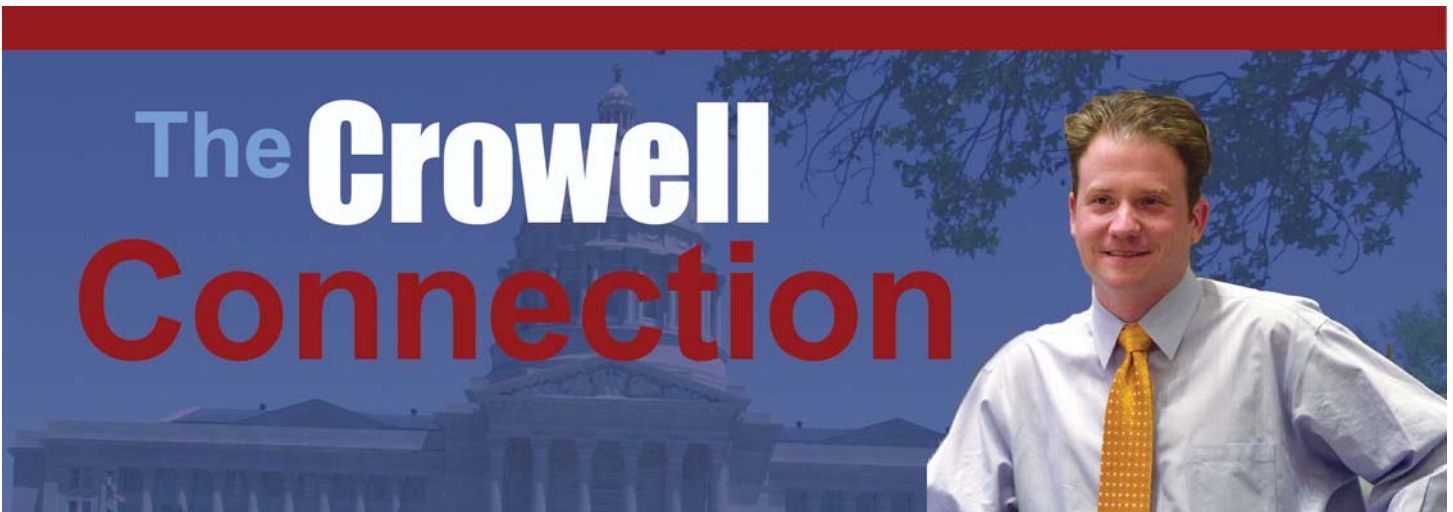
Honoring Aaron's Memory

Aaron McKinney's mother came to me last year and asked if it would be possible to name the portion of Route B between Highway 34 and Route UU in Bollinger County in honor of her son. The 15-year-old young man died from a car crash on that stretch of road. While recovering from the same crash in the hospital, Aaron's mother Dani Dunn made the decision that, from her tragedy, others could receive one of the greatest gifts one person can give to another through organ donation. I was proud to play a very small role in making sure Aaron McKinney's memory will continue to remind drivers of the importance of safe driving and the second chance one can give through becoming an organ donor.

Organ, tissue, and blood donation is a selfless act that requires you to literally give of yourself for the sake of another. Aaron McKinney's mother honored his wishes by donating her son's two kidneys, his pancreas, and his liver. He also gave two people the gift of sight and was a tissue donor for between 50-75 other people. In this way, Aaron's goal of helping people while he was alive was able to continue after his passing.



Jason, officials, and Aaron's family attend the Aaron McKinney Memorial Highway dedication ceremony.



Senator Jason Crowell

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