

Senator

34th District

Charlie Shields



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The 2008 legislative session was one of progress and growth for Missouri. My colleagues and I in the Missouri Senate passed a series of important initiatives that will better our state.

Legislation passed by the General Assembly this year protects Missouri jobs from illegal aliens, makes property taxes fairer, and helps combat instances of mortgage fraud.

The 2009 legislative session is quickly approaching, and I am preparing for another positive session.

Please contact me if you have any questions on the issues in this newsletter, or on any other legislative matter of importance to you. Your opinions help me to do a better job representing your interests in the Missouri Senate.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as your senator.



Sen. Shields speaks to members of the press.

Sincerely,

Acting Against Illegal Immigration

Illegal immigration is a problem that threatens Missouri jobs and services, but Washington D.C. has failed to act on the issue. The Missouri Legislature passed the nation's most sweeping illegal immigration reform law, which protects Missourians from the tens of millions of dollars the problem cost taxpayers each year. The legislation sends a clear message that the state will not tolerate illegal activity.

Stopping Unauthorized Workers

House Bill 1549 cracks down on employers who knowingly hire illegal immigrants and bars illegal immigrants from obtaining driver's licenses. The bill also contains a provision that prevents illegal residents from receiving state or local public benefits.

In order to protect jobs in this state, the legislation bars Missouri employers from hiring illegal immigrants. Employers would lose permits or licenses if they knowingly employ illegal workers. To be eligible for state contracts, employers must participate in a federal work authorization program, including public employers.

Employers who misclassify workers will be subject to penalties of \$50 per day per misclassified worker up to a maximum of \$50,000 in fines.

Giving Law Enforcement the Right Tools

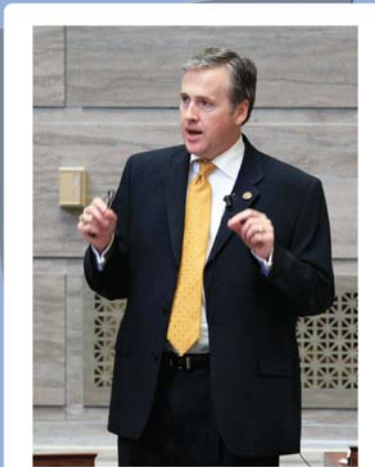
The bill also allows law enforcement officers to check the immigration status of anyone arrested or detained in Missouri, and prohibits bail for jailed individuals who cannot prove legal residency.

The Missouri State Highway Patrol will also receive training to enforce the new immigration laws.

A Strong Stand on Illegal Immigration

Other reforms prohibit communities from adopting safe sanctuary policies for illegals, bar individuals from transporting or harboring any illegal immigrant, require written tests for commercial licenses to be administered in English

only, and provide penalties for any individuals who use fraudulent means to assist illegal immigrants in obtaining a driver's license.



Sen. Shields on the Senate floor.

Getting Patients to the Best Care



Senator Shields is committed to improving healthcare in Missouri. House Bill 1790, which mirrors legislation sponsored by Sen. Shields (SB 1233), improves healthcare for patients suffering from stroke and heart attacks.

Currently, hospitals are designated as adult, pediatric or adult/pediatric trauma centers. This "Time

Critical Diagnosis System" allows trauma patients to be sent to the hospital designated to provide the best care possible. House Bill 1790 added "stroke and heart attack trauma" to the current designations. This will improve care to stroke and heart attack patients, who need time-critical care for their recovery.

Fairness in Your Property Taxes



Stopping Unexpected Increases

One of the most important investments one can make is in a home. Many Missourians are facing hardships from unexpected tax increases due to soaring 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.

Throughout the state, homeowners and businesses have realized large increases in their property values. Every two years, assessors in each county conduct general reassessments, the process of valuing properties for tax purposes. These reassessments are supposed to make sure that homes are being valued accurately—not enable the collection of tax revenue beyond what inflation and construction growth allow.

Mandatory Rollbacks

Most taxing entities (libraries, schools, cities, counties, etc.) are constitutionally required to “roll back” (lower) their maximum authorized tax rates if their total assessed value increases more than inflation. However, if the entity did not levy their maximum authorized tax rate in the year prior to reassessment, they may not have been required to roll back their tax rate levy.

Senate Bill 711 requires entities to roll back the tax rate if revenue increases higher than the rate of inflation, regardless of whether they are at their tax rate ceiling.

The legislation contains requirements to make sure that taxpayers are well informed on their taxes. Beginning

in the spring of 2011, counties (2009 for chartered counties) will be required to send taxpayers a projected tax liability statement to help prepare homeowners to pay their tax bill or appeal if necessary. This keeps homeowners from being caught off guard when their bill arrives.

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 ensures that Missouri seniors can afford a place to live.

Rising property taxes have been catching Missourians unprepared, but Sen. Shields is working to make sure that the process is fair and accurate. It is also important that taxpayers are informed and that those who need and deserve tax relief are able to receive it.

More for Missouri Schools

In 2005, Sen. Shields sponsored legislation creating an education funding formula that ensures every Missouri student can receive a world-class education. This new formula focuses on the needs of Missouri students rather than the tax capacity of a school district, and ensures a more equitable distribution of dollars statewide.

The formula increases education funding by \$800 million over a seven-year period. Since 2006, the General Assembly has fully funded the formula each year. In the current fiscal year, this amounts to a \$121 million increase.

These increases—made without a tax increase—are putting money directly into Missouri classrooms and assuring that school children in this state are able to receive a quality education. Senator Shields will continue to help improve the state’s public education system.



A Balanced Budget

Missouri's fiscal year 2009 budget (which took effect on July 1) provides funding for important programs and services used by Missourians. Some of the highlights of this year's budget include:

- ◆ A \$3.5 million increase in funding for the A+ Schools Program.
- ◆ A \$48.7 million increase for the Access Missouri Scholarship Program.
- ◆ \$2.2 million to fund the Serving Our Veterans Program.
- ◆ A \$7.4 million increase in funding for autism based programs.
- ◆ A \$73.3 million increase for MOHealthNet pharmacy services.

Distribution of Each Tax Dollar

FY 2009 MISSOURI OPERATING BUDGET

All Funds: \$22.4 Billion



*Revenue, Office of Administration, Elected Officials, General Assembly, Real Estate

Source: Senate Appropriation Committee

Protecting Homebuyers

Protecting homeowners from fraudulent mortgages was a top priority of the General Assembly this year. House Bill 2188, which mirrors a bill introduced by Sen. Shields, combats mortgage fraud in an aggressive way. The new law places local prosecutors on the same footing as federal investigators.

House Bill 2188 creates civil and criminal penalties for residential mortgage fraud. The legislation makes it a Class C felony to defraud any part of the mortgage process. This includes making untrue statements, omitting information, or influencing appraisals in certain circumstances. Violators could receive up to seven years in prison for defrauding the mortgage process.

Mortgage fraud ultimately contributes to higher loan costs and more restrictive lending practices. This legislation will protect all parties involved when buying and selling a home.



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