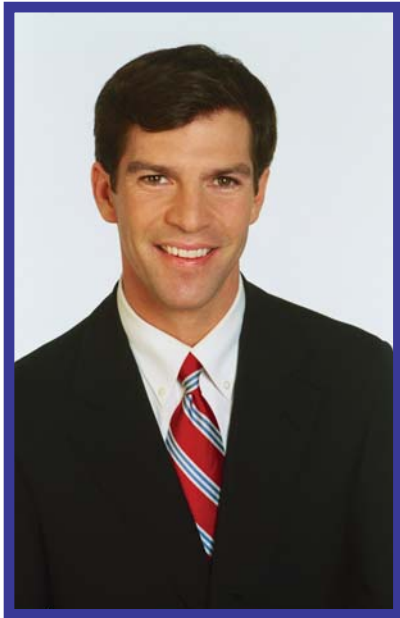




2008 Legislative Report



Senator Smith's Committees

- Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight
- Financial and Governmental Organizations and Elections
- Pensions, Veterans' Affairs and General Laws
- Seniors, Families and Public Health
- Governor's Advisory Council on Physical Fitness and Health
- Missouri Commission on Autism Disorders

Dear Neighbor,

My first two years in Jefferson City have been challenging but productive, and I want to thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve.

In legislating, as in life, balance is key. Learning how to stick to principle while making compromises to help people in need is the balance I have tried to find. Some days I fought tooth and nail for what I believed was right — and what I thought was in our best interest. Other times, a compromise was needed.

The one constant is that I have been inspired by those of you who reach out to me. Whether through an email, a phone call, or a trip to the Capitol, your feedback has guided me every day. So, I want to thank you for your help.

In the following pages you will find a brief overview of the second regular session of the 94th Missouri General Assembly, and some of the initiatives on which I have focused. In last year's report, I described a rancorous, partisan session. This year I'm pleased to tell you that the Senate was more civil and productive. Next year promises to be another challenge. But I'm excited to move past this election year and make the difference that I came to Jefferson City to make.

Thanks again for your support.

Senator Smith's Staff

Christine Brauner - Administrative Assistant

Stacy Morse - Legislative Assistant

Johnny Little - District Assistant

Interns

Susan Marie Clark, Andy Lanphere & Antonio Rodriguez

Capitol Office

State Capitol Building Room 425
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Phone Number: 573.751.3599 **Fax:** 573.751.0266

Toll-free: 866.783.1534

Website: www.senate.mo.gov/smith — **E-mail:** Jeff.Smith@senate.mo.gov

Sometimes You Win...

Energy Initiatives Will Have Missourians Seeing More 'Green'

The General Assembly passed a wide-ranging bipartisan “green building” bill during this session that contained many of my proposals for reducing public buildings’ impact on human health and the environment — one of my top priorities.

Senate Bill 1181, the bipartisan product of negotiations between Sen. Kevin Engler, Sen. Joan Bray, and myself, includes several provisions to increase the energy efficiency of state buildings. It also subsidizes home energy audits, offers low-interest loans to alternative energy businesses, develops a minimum energy efficiency standard for appliances, and creates a “green” sales tax holiday each year, beginning in 2009.

The first set of proposals that I originally sponsored in SB 1117 that were included in SB 1181 dramatically strengthened state energy efficiency standards. First, we increased the standard for new appliances sold in Missouri. Second, we ensured that the design of all newly constructed



Jeff meets with a group of St. Louis students who testified during a Senate hearing to discuss their award-winning “green” project.

or leased state buildings must comply with a new higher standard, and we guaranteed that by 2016, at least 10 percent of electricity used in state buildings will come from renewable sources.

The measure contains other proposals I sponsored, including the “Show Me Green Sales Tax Holiday,” which will take place between April 19 and April 25 each year. During that time, sales of Energy Star-certified new appliances will be exempt from sales taxes. Finally, we created a tax

deduction of up to \$1,000 to help people offset the cost of home energy audits and any renovations recommended by a certified auditor with expertise in energy efficiency.

These measures will encourage environmentally-friendly development, which can spawn new industries to meet the demand for “green” products and can stimulate the struggling housing market.

We’re proud that our state government is taking the lead in promoting sustainability in Missouri.

Alternative Certification Draws More Teachers to Classroom

Both urban and rural Missouri are in desperate need of qualified math and science teachers. To expedite the filling of these positions, we must look to alternatives to get capable educators into our classrooms as quickly as possible.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly passed Senate Bill 1066, which creates an alternative route for career-changing professionals to become certified to teach in secondary schools. Under the program, teachers are required to complete certification from the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, a non-profit organization based in Washington, D.C., that is funded through federal grants. In addition to completing coursework and certification exams, prospective teachers must hold a bachelor’s degree or higher, complete a

background check, and complete two weeks of classroom instruction under the supervision of a mentor-teacher.

The program is designed to offer mid-career professionals, such as scientists, engineers, and accountants, an opportunity to bring their real-world experience to the classroom. The legislation specifies that a teacher must still receive traditional certification to teach early childhood, elementary and special education.

I co-sponsored SB 1066 with Sen. Luann Ridgeway, and was gratified the governor visited a school I co-founded with Dr. Susan Uchitelle and Sarah Smith — *Confluence Academy’s* Old North St. Louis campus — to sign the bill into law.

...Sometimes You Lose

Campaign Finance

Candidates for office spend too much time raising money. The demands of campaign fundraising can have corrosive effects on the policy process; our system needs drastic reform.

In this spirit, I offered a bill (Senate Bill 1071) to create a **voluntary** public financing system, sometimes called Clean Money or Voter-Owned Elections. Under my proposed system, candidates seeking public financing must collect a certain number of \$5 donations from registered voters and agree to abide by spending limits. In return, they receive a flat sum for their campaigns and cannot raise money from special-interest lobbyists or other private sources.

Similar Clean Election laws have been successful in Arizona and Maine; for instance, nearly 90 percent of candidates in Maine now participate in the clean elections process. They say that it has helped them refocus their energies away from fundraising and onto listening to constituents and crafting legislation.

In any case, I tried to amend my bill onto a separate campaign finance bill that went in the opposite direction (it repealed all limits on campaign contributions). I lost — and I lost badly. When my amendment came up for a voice vote, I was the only senator to shout “Aye!” The bill that ultimately passed allows contributions of any amount — even a million dollars! — to a candidate. My amendment would have cost each taxpayer just \$2 a year to fund all legislative campaigns. Wouldn’t that be a small price to pay to feel like you have your democracy back?

Earned Income Tax Credit

This year, I made another attempt to create a state earned income tax credit to benefit low-income Missourians who work full-time by reducing their tax liability and allowing them to keep more money in their pockets.

Senate Bill 852 — modeled after successful programs in other states that have lifted millions of workers over the poverty line — would support full-time workers by providing a state earned income tax credit, equal to 5 percent of the federal earned income credit.

Under the program, eligible taxpayers who received the federal credit would have reduced their state tax liability by a percentage of the federal award. For example, in the first year of the program, a family whose federal credit was \$3,000 would have received \$150, or 5 percent, to apply toward their state tax liability. I proposed doubling the amount every two years until it reached a cap of 20 percent in 2013.

Although Senate Bill 852 did not become law this year, I’ll continue to pursue programs like this to help hard-working citizens. We should reward work by giving people a hand up, not a handout.

Healthcare

One of the most important tasks as your state senator is to fight to ensure our most vulnerable citizens have access to adequate healthcare. That’s why I supported the 2008 Missouri Health Transformation Act (Senate Bill 1283). Senate Bill 1283 would have covered people earning up to 225 percent of the poverty level. Had it passed, the state would have paid their insurance premiums while requiring participants to pay up to \$1,000 a year toward their deductibles. While it did not fully restore the benefits slashed in 2005 that many of my colleagues and I have fought to restore, it did cover an additional 200,000 Missourians.

I fought to improve the plan with an amendment providing \$7 million annually for medically necessary dental services. For far too long, dental care has been a low priority for adults struggling to make ends meet — and become yet another obstacle in their attempt to find and keep decent-paying jobs. Unfortunately, the overall healthcare proposal died in the House after passing in the Senate. But I promise to continue working to ensure all Missourians have access to affordable healthcare.



Jeff greets the St. Louis Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association as they promote “Memory Day” in March and lobby for quality healthcare during a visit to the State Capitol.

Education Initiatives A Priority for Senator Smith

Early Childhood Education

Early childhood education is critical. Study after study shows that young children who fail to receive the early brain stimulation they need can never recover, and suffer from developmental delays that dramatically reduce their likelihood of making it to college. That's why I introduced the Missouri Preschool Plus Grant Program (Senate Bill 779), which would have offered subsidized early childhood programs at licensed facilities to 1,200 city children whose families live in poverty.

The legislation was approved by the Senate and cleared a House committee, but did not reach the House floor. This would have been an essential stepping stone for families who otherwise could not afford to place their young children in a quality learning environment, which is imperative for them to succeed in school and life. Early childhood education will remain a top priority of mine next year.

After-School Program Incentives

Quality after-school programs provide tremendous learning for students — in addition to keeping them safe in neighborhoods that can be dangerous. All too often, funding for these programs is nonexistent, particularly in our struggling school districts. That's why I proposed offering tax credits for people who donate to non-profit after-school programs in unaccredited school districts.

Under the provisions of Senate Bill 1086, entities that contributed up to \$50,000 a year could have received a 50 percent tax credit toward their state income tax liability.



Jeff greets students at the Confluence Academy, where he was invited to read to students to reinforce the benefits of good reading skills.



Jeff has visited more than 40 schools and met with thousands of students over the past two years.

'4 More 4 Missouri'

A parent or trusted adult's influence and interest in a child's education is unmatched. My Senate Bill 1182 sought to establish the "4 More 4 Missouri Program" — a program that would have allowed parents and guardians of students in grades K-4 to receive four hours of optional paid leave per month to volunteer in their children's schools or visit schools for parent-teacher conferences.

Class Size

Class overcrowding is a problem I sought to address with Senate Bill 829, which would have guaranteed that city public schools maintain a ratio of 18 students per teacher in grades K-8.

While time ran out last session for ample consideration of education policy, I will continue working next session to enact the above proposals.

College Savings

More Missouri families now have an increased ability to save for the cost of a college education thanks to legislation that expands tax deductions to all college savings plans (529s).

Senate Bill 863 encourages families to take the initiative to save for their children's college expenses and provides a tax break incentive for doing so. Through Missouri's 529 College Savings Plan, called MOST (Missouri Savings for Tuition Program), and other qualified college savings plans, taxpayers are allowed a state income tax deduction of up to \$8,000 per year or up to \$16,000 per year for married taxpayers filing jointly.

Reducing Property Taxes

Stopping Unexpected Increases

Many people face hardships from unexpected tax increases due to reassessments. Senate Bill 711 protects taxpayers from “backdoor” tax increases by mandating tax rollbacks, closing loopholes, informing taxpayers, and expanding tax relief to seniors and the disabled. Every two years, the assessor’s office conducts a reassessment that determines the value of your property and your tax liability. These reassessments are supposed to make sure that homes are being valued accurately.

Mandatory Rollbacks

Most 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 had to roll back their tax rate in the reassessment year. Senate Bill 711’s mandatory rollbacks require entities to lower taxes if revenue rises higher than the rate of inflation, regardless of whether they are taxing at their rate ceiling.

Also, beginning in spring of 2009, charter counties and the City of St. Louis 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.



Jeff presents Dr. James Hayden a Senate proclamation recognizing his more than 50 years as a Missouri dentist.

Are you a senior who owns your own home?
Is your income less than \$77,323?
You may be eligible for the
Homestead Preservation Tax Credit.

Are you a single senior who owns your own home
with a total household income of \$30,000 or less or
a married senior with an income of \$34,000 or less?

or

Are you a single senior who pays rent
or taxes on the home you occupy with
a total household income of \$27,500 or less
or a married senior with an income
of \$29,500 or less?

You may be eligible for the
2008 Property Tax Credit
(also known as the Circuit Breaker Tax Credit).

Call the Tax Assistance Center
at 314-877-0177 to find out more about
these property tax assistance programs or
visit www.dor.mo.gov.

Claims can be filed beginning Jan. 1, 2009

Help for Seniors

Two important programs in our state help elderly and disabled residents who might have trouble paying taxes on their homes. The Property Tax Credit and the Homestead Preservation Tax Credit programs offer eligible residents relief on their property taxes. (See accompanying box above to see which one you might qualify for.)

Senate Bill 711 expanded these property tax assistance programs to ensure that no one in this state has to struggle to afford a place to live — especially not our seniors.

Unclaimed Property

Millions of dollars of unclaimed treasures (whose owners could not be contacted) are turned over to the Missouri State Treasurer’s office. To file a claim or to see if the Treasurer’s office has property of yours go to:

www.showmemoney.com
Missouri State Treasurer
P.O. Box 1004
Jefferson City, MO 65102-1004

Community Fair Focuses On Fun, Health & Local Services

On Saturday, July 19, approximately 2,000 people attended my third annual 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament and Community Fair at Fairground Park. This was not just a day of games and fun. We gave away notebooks, pencils, rulers and other school supplies to students.

Over 70 non-profit organizations and community services offered information, activities, and services, including free

health screenings for vision, HIV, lead testing, as well as chiropractic evaluations. Volunteers distributed information on parenting, health, housing, literacy, childcare, community-building, and much more. Adults registered to vote and people of all ages signed up for new library cards.

The 3-on-3 basketball tournament was comprised of four age divisions: 10 and under, 11-13, 14-16, and 17 and up. With a star-studded field including former NBA talent (and Vashon High alum) Anthony Bonner, the games were hotly contested but characterized by hustle and sportsmanship. Winners received

prizes ranging from new bicycles to amusement park and concert tickets. In an unusually spirited match-up, my team lost in the quarterfinals to the Fairground Legends, who went on to win the tournament.

I think I nursed my bruises until the fall veto session.



Organizers ready teams for tourney



Jeff announces the 3-on-3 tourney winners.



To the victors go the trophies.



A great crowd enjoyed the festivities.



The 8- to 10-year-old winners.



Hoop play continued throughout the day.

4th District Survey

- Should the state ban all automated political calls? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- Do you believe that the state's health insurance program for low-income citizens should include dental care? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- Do you believe it is a patient's right to have their lawfully prescribed contraceptive medication filled by any pharmacist, and without abnormal delay? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- If a school district has a high incidence of drop-out rates, should they be eligible to receive state funds in order to help them implement programs aimed at decreasing drop-out rates? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- Do you believe abstinence-only programs should be the only sexual education programs taught in public schools? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- If all high school juniors had access to an online ACT preparation course, do you think that would improve, overall, ACT scores across school districts? Yes___No___ Don't know___
- If you have a child or children in public schools, how likely would you be to participate in an optional program that gives parents, guardians, and step-parents four hours of paid work leave per month if they spend those four hours helping their child in his/her own school? Yes___No___ NA___ Don't know___
- Should voters be allowed to register at the polls on the same day of an election? Yes___No___ Don't know___

(Optional)

- Please give us your zip code_____ How long have you lived in the 4th Senatorial District?_____

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

Please clip & fold the survey in thirds so only the outgoing address is visible. Place stamp in upper right-hand corner before mailing.

State Senator Jeff Smith
201 W. Capitol Ave.
Room 425
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Place
Stamp
Here

Please be sure to fold the outgoing survey in thirds, so that only the outgoing address is visible.

Gubernatorial Appointments from the 4th Senate District



*Jeff with Jeanette Brown
MO Child Abuse & Neglect
Review Board*



*Jeff with Annetta Vickers
MO Child Abuse & Neglect
Review Board*



*Jeff with Tammy McLane
Organ Donation
Advisory Committee*



*Jeff with Todd Epstein
St. Louis City Board
of Police Commissioners*



*Jeff with James Buford
MO Commission on
Human Rights*



*Jeff with Brenda Wrench
MO Workforce Investment Board*



*Jeff with Mary Beth Luna Wolf
Coordinating Board
for Higher Education*

Not pictured: Wayman Smith,
Harris-Stowe State University
Board of Regents.

State Senator Jeff Smith

201 W Capitol Ave RM 425
Jefferson City MO 65101

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