



Senate's First Measures Reach the House

JEFFERSON CITY — I am pleased to report the Missouri Senate has endorsed a sizable number of important pieces of legislation during the first half of this legislative session — all designed to improve the lives of Missouri citizens. Several bills are already in the Missouri House for equal consideration. I feel confident of their merits and hope they will advance to the governor's desk for signing into law.

Property tax and campaign finance reforms, legislation to curb rampant copper theft, the addition of juvenile offenders to the DNA profiling system, anti-meth bills, deterrents for underage drinking, penalties for mortgage fraud, and my own measure to fight cyber stalking and cyber harassment are among the initiatives that have been debated, approved and sent to the House.

Since this session began, I have also worked diligently to forward several other measures, including those that address two of my top legislative concerns: autism and illegal immigration.

My Senate Bill 768 regarding autism awaits first-round approval by the Senate and it should be taken up for a vote soon. My measure will create the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders and provide a coordinated system of healthcare for families affected by this troubling disease. The National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates one out of 150 kids is diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Stopping illegal immigration and its enormous costs are the objectives of my Senate Bill 858, which will strengthen immigration laws and hold employers accountable for hiring illegal aliens. Under my proposal, illegal aliens will also be prevented from obtaining state or local public benefits. My proposal will be voted on soon by the Senate committee considering the bill.

Other initiatives of mine under deliberation include:

- Increasing access to higher education through scholarships to public or private four-year colleges or universities for students who have graduated or transferred from a public community college or other two-year institution.
- Providing grants to cover tuition and other fees for elementary and secondary students with developmental abilities at qualified public and non-public schools.
- Expanding the state's no-call list to include automated calls and requiring a "paid for by" statement on political phone calls.

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- Increasing the penalties for dogfighting spectators and offering more protections for the animals once they are rescued.

We've made a lot of progress this session, and I look forward to continuing the important work of enacting just and impactful laws that improve the lives of Missouri citizens. The Senate is on mid-session break and resumes March 25.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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