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## **New Missouri Laws Take Effect**

JEFFERSON CITY — On Aug. 28th, most of the bills passed during the 2008 legislative session officially became law. Of the 578 Senate bills introduced this year, 61 were passed, and 58 received the governor's signature. Seventy-six House Bills were also signed into law. I was pleased to play an important role in advancing several new laws that serve to benefit Missourians and make our state a great place to live.

One of the major accomplishments of this year's General Assembly was reforming our state's property tax system. Senate Bill 711 requires taxing entities to reduce their property tax rates whenever assessed property values rise by more than inflation. I wholeheartedly supported the measure, which particularly affected our area and other large metropolitan areas in the state, to prevent homeowners from being taxed out of their homes.

With new groundbreaking laws now in place to fight illegal immigration activity, the state legislature honored its commitment to position Missouri as a leader in addressing this issue, which costs taxpayers millions of dollars in lost benefits and services each year. My newly enacted measures to shield jobs and public benefits were incorporated into House Bill 1549.

Missouri now has a law on the books to deal with cyber harassment. That was the aim of legislation (Senate Bill 818) I successfully advanced that now makes harassment and stalking through electronic communication devices, such as the Internet, a crime. Missouri also now provides more buffers and protections for children against Internet predators and child pornographers — and tougher penalties for child pornography and other sex crimes against children — with the enactment of Senate Bill 714. Our state is now one of the toughest in the nation in fighting these kinds of horrible and unspeakable crimes.

Empowering families living with autism was another legislative priority of mine that met with success. Senate Bill 768, now in effect, creates a statewide commission to address the urgent need of families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders and makes it easier for them to access services and support. While serving on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I was able to double funding for autism diagnosis and treatment for this fiscal year with a \$7.4 million increase.

A new consumer protection law I forwarded now protects consumers who are the victims or potential victims of identity theft. My measure, incorporated into House Bill 1384, allows consumers to request a security freeze on their credit file at the first sign of identity theft to prevent someone from trying to receive credit, loans or services in their name. A credit freeze can save consumers time, headaches and money and puts them in control of who gets access to personal and financial information contained in their credit files.

Some other newly enacted laws, include:

- Missouri's threshold for boating while intoxicated is now 0.08 percent blood-alcohol content (lowered from 0.10 percent).
- Alternative teacher certification procedures through the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence program are available to qualified Missouri residents.
- Advanced practice nurses can write prescriptions for some controlled substances, including pain relievers and cough and nausea medicines.
- Electric or natural gas companies cannot shut off services when the temperature is likely to rise above 95 degrees or the heat index above 105 degrees within 24 hours.
- Family members can no longer overrule the organ donor wishes of Missourians following donor deaths.
- It's now a felony to steal certain wires and pipes, with scrap dealers required to obtain and retain photo identifications of people selling more than \$50 in metals, such as copper and aluminum.
- Tuition limits are in effect at higher education institutions for certain combat veterans.
- Heavy trucks are banned from far left-hand lanes on urban roadways with three or more lanes of traffic going in the same direction.

My fellow lawmakers and I are gearing up for the veto session, which takes place at the Capitol the week of September 8. Three Senate bills received a veto and will be returned to the upper chamber with the governor's objections. One House bill was also vetoed, along with five line items vetoes in various budget bills. A two-thirds vote is required by both the Senate and the House to override a governor's veto.

Carefully considering and crafting laws in partnership with Missourians, and then working to see that only those measures that are truly needed become law, is a wonderful part of our political process each year. I am especially pleased with the General Assembly's progress this year in enacting laws designed to benefit the lives of our state's citizens.

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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