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Legislative Session Ends with Property Tax and Illegal Immigration Reform

Now that the 2008 legislative session is officially over, we can take a moment to reflect on the legislation that we successfully passed. From property tax reform to illegal immigration, and education to cyber-crimes, we worked to pass several bills that will help improve the quality of life for Missourians.

One of the most publicized measures passed this session was [SB 711](#), which helps to protect taxpayers from excessive, sudden property tax increases by requiring tax rate rollbacks, closing loopholes in the current law and by requiring early notification and more information regarding tax liability. Legislation to increase tax relief to seniors and the disabled was also passed.

Frustrated by the lack of action by Congress on the critical and timely issue of illegal immigration, we were compelled to pass legislation that tackles the problem. Sweeping illegal immigration reform was sent to the governor, protecting Missourians' jobs and providing better resources for employers to check the U.S. citizenship status of their employees. [House Bill 1549](#) also ensures that only citizens will receive services reserved for taxpayers.

We also expanded the educational opportunities for students in Missouri, giving our children, no matter where they live or what their financial situation may be, access to a good education. Lawmakers approved a \$121.3 million increase of the school foundation funding formula, as well as a \$3.5 million increase to fund even more eligible students for the A+ Schools Program. We also continued our commitment to provide increased need-based college scholarship funding, with more than \$100 million set aside to help our college students fulfill their higher education goals.

Missouri's children will be more protected — even online. By passing Megan's Law, named for Megan Meier, the Missouri teenager who committed suicide after being harassed by a neighbor online, Web-based harassment is now a criminal offense. [Senate Bill 818](#) also strengthens our current harassment and stalking laws.

In the coming months, I will discuss these topics more in depth. If you have any 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 e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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