



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8** – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Column for Week of:  
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## **Exercising Your Right to Vote**

The right to vote in a free and fair election is the most fundamental element of a democratic-republic. Without it, officials are not accountable to the public, and if they are not accountable, there is no guarantee that our rights are protected.

This week Missouri held its primary election, where people cast their votes for a variety of offices. Voter turnout was expected to be around 31 percent, though it's estimated the turnout was actually much lower — perhaps partially due to the excessive heat. If you didn't cast a vote on Tuesday, your voice can still be heard in the general election on Nov. 4. By now you know that you cannot turn on the news without hearing about the upcoming presidential election, but Missouri will have its own fair share of exciting political races come fall. With nearly all of the statewide seats up for election, and three measures on the ballot, voters will have plenty to decide in November.

Missouri is one of only 24 states that allows its citizens the opportunity to change state laws and the state constitution through circulating petitions. By following the petition process and obtaining a certain percentage of qualified signatures, Missourians can take action by getting their initiative on the ballot for a statewide vote.

One of this year's ballot measures is Constitutional Amendment 1, which was proposed by the Legislature in 2007. The amendment (which I voted for) establishes English as the official language of all governmental meetings where policy is discussed or decided.

Also appearing on the ballot is a proposal to remove the limitations placed on the casino industry by the voters back in the 1990s. Under current law, those patronizing casinos are prohibited from losing more than \$500 during a preset time period. The reason this particular measure will be on the ballot is that the well-heeled casino industry has so far been unable to get the State Legislature to change the law on its behalf. This determined resistance by elected officials has caused it to seek other avenues — namely putting the issue on the November ballot. More will be said about this issue later.

Taking the time to research candidates and issues can be time-consuming and just making it to the voting booth can be a struggle with our busy schedules. However, we cannot depend on others to cast the "right" vote for us and taking the time to exercise this fundamental right is important. The last day to register to vote for the general election is Oct. 8. You can get more information about registering by visiting the Missouri Secretary of State's Web site at [www.sos.mo.gov/elections](http://www.sos.mo.gov/elections).

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](mailto: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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