



Capitol Report

State Senator Luann RIDGEWAY



STRENGTHENING BUSINESSES AND ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Jobs rely on our local businesses, which are the economic backbone of Missouri. Helping them not only to succeed, but prosper, should be a top priority for all of us, and certainly is for me.

Did you know that just four years ago, Missouri was one of the top job-LOSS states in the nation but is now among the top job-GAIN states in the U.S.? Missouri has gained **nearly 80,000 new jobs since 2005!**

The Missouri Legislature has created several programs designed to give businesses a boost when they help create high-paying jobs. The Quality Jobs Act is an incentive program for businesses that provide good jobs and pay more than the county's average wage, as well as pay at least 50 percent of health insurance costs. The 2005 act has been so successful that it was expanded this past legislative session and has been extended through August 2013. Clay County workers have directly benefited from this. A perfect example is the creation of great new jobs at American Central Transport (ACT) — a Clay County trucking business with facilities in both Liberty and Kansas City.

The quality of the workforce at the Ford Claycomo plant is a vital reason for its continued success. Ford workers in Clay County have been able to keep their jobs — when workers at a Ford plant near St. Louis lost theirs — in part due to Missouri's legislative reforms. One example is worker job-retraining funds the Missouri Legislature has made available so that our workers can remain on top of the automation advances needed in modern plants. Retraining is necessary to keep these great Ford jobs in Clay County.

Missouri has also made common-sense reforms in workers' compensation laws. Prior to reform, a worker could actually get compensation if he/she was injured while drugged or drunk on the job! The reforms we made cut out this and other nonsensical payments, while still protecting workers for true, work-related injuries. One small business in Smithville has reported over a 30 percent decrease in workers' compensation insurance premiums. The savings represent money that the business can now spend on pay increases or job expansion in Smithville, rather than shipping the money away to an out-of-state insurance company.

I am constantly on the lookout for ways to improve and expand our jobs right here in Clay County. Smithville has been my home for nearly 25 years. The most important information I can take to Jefferson City is your opinion. Your thoughts on the information in this report or any other issue of importance to you really make a difference! Please contact me at luann.ridgeway@senate.mo.gov, or visit www.senate.mo.gov/ridgeway for more information.