



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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A Weekly Column for the
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Senate Approves Tax Relief for Homeowners; Debates Biodiesel Bill

JEFFERSON CITY – I'm sure a lot of folks are pretty excited that temperatures are starting to climb and spring is right around the corner. Farmers are making plans for spring planting and gardeners are starting seeds and deciding what to plant once the danger of frost is gone. I've noticed a few Crocus and Daffodils shooting up through the dead leaves, so it won't be long until we can put another winter behind us.

This week the Senate gave final approval to Senate Bill 711, which prevents tax increases caused by reassessment. This is a big problem in the St. Louis area, where some assessors have failed to roll back property tax rates after reassessment, resulting in higher taxes for homeowners. This bill also increases the award for the Property Tax Credit Program, called the circuit breaker, from \$750 to \$1,100. The program gives credit to certain senior citizens and 100% disabled individuals for a portion of the real estate taxes or rent they have paid for the year. Currently, the program offers a \$2,000 deduction for married couple, effectively penalizing seniors who are married. I offered an amendment to raise the marriage deduction to \$20,000. My amendment would have increased eligibility for the circuit breaker by increasing the individual income limit from \$27,500 to \$32,000.

The sponsor of the bill offered a substitute amendment, which was approved, increasing the marriage deduction from \$2,000 to \$10,000, while increasing the income eligibility limit to from \$27,500 to \$30,000. While I wish my version had prevailed, this bill will still help a lot of folks living on fixed incomes remain in their homes.

This week we debated a bill requiring all diesel fuel sold in Missouri to be blended with five percent biodiesel, which is produced from soybeans. It's similar to the requirement we passed last year that most gasoline sold in Missouri be ten percent ethanol, which has done wonders for corn producers in the state. Some of the same folks who opposed the ethanol requirement last year are opposed to the biodiesel measure this year, but I think common sense will win in the end and we'll pass this bill. Like ethanol, biodiesel will help break our dependence on foreign oil, it will help our farmers and it will help our rural economy. It will be keeping our wealth in the Midwest and not in the Middle East.

We were swamped with visitors to our Capitol office this week, including members of the Missouri State Teachers Association, representatives from the Missouri School Boards Association, members of the Silver Haired Legislature, a number of circuit clerks, and folks from the Kraft Foods plant in Kirksville. We also welcomed Vandalia High School student Erin Ward, who spent a day following us around to see how things get done at the Capitol.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.