



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer  
18<sup>th</sup> Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the  
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**Contact: Kathy Armstrong  
(573) 751-7852**

# A Good Week for Missouri Agriculture

JEFFERSON CITY – This has been a good week for agriculture in the Missouri Legislature. This week we gave first round approval to a Senate Bill 759 which requires all diesel fuel sold in Missouri be a five percent biodiesel blended fuel. Fuel terminals would be able to sell non-blended diesel fuel if the price of biodiesel blended fuels is higher than conventional diesel fuel. I think this legislation will help our soybean farmers much like the ethanol bill we passed last year has helped our corn farmers.

We also spent a lot of time discussing a bill which provides a variety of tax credits and exemptions for agriculture-related purchases and ventures. Senate Bill 898 provides some tax credits for odor abatement measures adopted by the owners of concentrated animal feeding operations, it creates a sales tax exemption for the purchase of fencing materials for farming, and it creates a sales tax exemption for the purchase of motor fuel for farming. The measure also provides state aid to motorists who buy biofuels, ethanol producers, dairy and livestock farmers and an agriculture education program.

Senators adopted my amendment increasing the tax levy counties may impose to buy gravel for roads. Right now certain counties can charge up to 25-cents per acre to put gravel on their roads. My amendment allows counties, with voter approval, to levy up to a dollar per acre for the purchase of gravel and it expands the number of counties eligible for this tax levy. As you know, this winter and spring have been really tough on the gravel roads in northeast Missouri and it's going to take a lot of gravel to get them up to speed again. Although SB 898 attracted more than a dozen amendments, many of which have nothing to do with farming, the Senate gave the bill first-round approval this week.

We also gave initial approval to a bill that creates a quality rating system for child care facilities.

Senate Bill 726 also creates the Quality Rating System Program Improvement Grant Fund. Money in the fund will be used to provide grants to licensed child care providers seeking help for quality improvements in order to undergo an evaluation under the quality rating system or to community-based organizations assisting providers with those improvements. My amendment requiring those grants to be awarded proportionally between rural and urban child care facilities was adopted.

Unfortunately, an amendment expanding the state's support of child care subsidies for low-income parents was rejected. I supported this amendment because Missouri's income eligibility level for child care assistance is among the lowest in the country. Child care subsidies support low-income working families by helping them keep their jobs and move off of welfare assistance.

This week the Senate also gave first round approval to my bill allowing cities, towns, villages and counties to impose a property tax to fund cemetery maintenance. Many of our rural cemeteries are supported by donations and too many are in bad shape. Senate Bill 822 allows the governing body of a city, town, village or county to submit a proposal to its voters allowing the municipality to impose a property tax to fund cemetery maintenance. The tax would not exceed one fourth of one cent per one hundred dollars assessed valuation and would not become effective until approved by the voters. We need to protect our historical legacy and we must preserve the dignity of our ancestors' final resting places.

We welcomed a lot of folks to our Capitol office this week, including our district engineer Paula Gough and her daughter, Nancy Voepel and Connie Painter of Monroe City, advocates for the Alzheimer's Association, folks with Missouri Right to Life, gifted students from Paris Elementary, and our Doctor of the Day, Dr. Richard Draper and his wife from Hannibal.

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](mailto:wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov), or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.