



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer
18th 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**

Midpoint Review

JEFFERSON CITY – While we’re at the midpoint of the legislative session I thought I’d take a look at what we’ve accomplished so far and look ahead to the second half of the session, which gets underway March 25.

First of all, I have been pleased with the civility we’ve seen in the Senate during the first half of the session. Both sides have worked together to pass bills without the acrimony we saw last year. I know the pressure will mount as time begins to run out during the second half of the session, but I’m hopeful that we can maintain the civility and decorum that are hallmarks of the Missouri Senate.

Several bills that I support have already been approved by the Senate and sent to the House for consideration. Senate Bill 931 bars the state Department of Agriculture from participating in the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) without legislative approval. SB 931 says the state may support a “voluntary” animal identification program, but we don’t need a bunch of bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., telling us how to operate our farms in Missouri. The Senate also approved and sent to the House a bill giving advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) the authority to prescribe certain controlled substances. I strongly support this bill because APRNs with prescriptive authority will be able to make up for the shortage of doctors in rural areas.

I served on a committee during the interim that looked into the low salaries paid to deputy sheriffs throughout the state. I’m pleased the Senate has given final approval to Senate Bill 935, which creates the Deputy Sheriff Salary Supplementation Fund. The fund will consist of money generated by a \$10 fee collected for serving civil summons and subpoena. When the Senate Interim Committee on the Funding for County Sheriffs Offices toured Shelby County last year,

we heard stories of deputy sheriffs having to work two or three jobs just to make ends meet. The legislation is expected to generate \$4-6 million per year, boosting the salaries of sheriffs' deputies across Missouri to about \$28,000. Right now, those deputies earn just over \$22,000 per year, and many are forced to look for better paying jobs with the Highway Patrol or in another state.

Before we adjourned for spring break, we gave first-round approval to a Senate Bill 759 which requires all diesel fuel sold in Missouri be a 5 percent biodiesel blended fuel. I think this legislation will help our soybean farmers much like the ethanol bill we passed last year has helped our corn farmers. Senators adopted my amendment to another bill increasing the tax levy counties can impose to buy gravel for roads. Right now counties can charge up to 25-cents per acre to put gravel on their roads. My amendment allows counties 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.

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.

During the second half of the legislative session, I think we'll take up several bills dealing with health care, immigration and taxes. Although these issues will be more controversial than the bills we've dealt with so far, I hope the members of the Senate will continue to work in the same spirit of cooperation that we've seen during the first half of the session.

Over our spring break from the legislative session, I had the opportunity to speak to the Mexico Chamber of Commerce. I discussed what has been taking place in the Senate during the first half of session and what we could look for during the second half. I also took the opportunity to tour the Mexico Public Schools with Superintendent Tina Woolsey. We toured many of the school buildings during the day and I was able to see first hand the new technologies that are available to our students.

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.