



## 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  
Week of Mar. 31, 2008**

**Contact: Kathy Armstrong  
(573) 751-7852**

# A Predictable Result

---

JEFFERSON CITY – Sometimes it’s really tempting to say, “I told you so.” I don’t mean to be a smart-aleck, but things have come to pass with our state student loan agency that I warned would happen last year. Last week, the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority or MOHELA delayed about half of its required payment to the state because the loan agency is in real trouble. As part of last session’s deal to sell off \$350 million in MOHELA assets to pay for college construction projects, the loan agency agreed to pay the state \$5 million each quarter. However, the loan agency has lost \$12.9 million this year, so it couldn’t pay what it owes the state. MOHELA board members also said they might have to delay the second half of the payment if things don’t improve.

For years, MOHELA has been helping Missourians go to college by buying their student loans and then charging the student a reduced interest rate. Originally, by state statute, MOHELA’s only mission was to provide access to higher education and to give loan forgiveness for individuals who come back to underserved areas of Missouri to be a dentist, nurse or teacher. Last year when folks wanted to sell a big chunk of MOHELA’s assets to pay for new buildings on college campuses, I and others warned the sale could hurt MOHELA’s ability to help students go to college. Well guess what? MOHELA has laid off employees this year and suspended some of its student loan programs. MOHELA blames the national credit crunch and federal cuts to lending agencies, but I think MOHELA could have weathered this storm much better if we hadn’t put the agency in a much weaker financial position. This week we approved a bill that allows MOHELA to originate 10% of its federal student loans, but it’s probably a matter of too little too late.

I've often said the best ideas come from constituents in the district and that's true for a bill I'm sponsoring that received final approval in the Senate last week. Jim Perkins, a retired member of the US Air Force living in Unionville, suggested coming up with a method to fund maintenance at our rural cemeteries. Jim is a member of the Missouri Military Honor Team which performs military services for deceased veterans in Missouri. He says many of the cemeteries where those services are held are in poor condition. Senate Bill 822 allows 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. SB 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 had a lengthy discussion this week on expanding the state's No Call list to include political "robo calls," those automated messages that come at all hours of the day urging you to vote for this person or that issue. The bill allows some exemptions, such as calls from public safety agencies warning of an emergency, but it would prevent politicians from calling your house if you don't want to be bothered. It also adds faxes and text messages to the no call list since it's the person receiving those faxes or text messages who pays for them.

We welcomed a lot of visitors to our capitol office this week, including members of the Kirksville Chamber of Commerce, FFA and independent bankers. I also had a chance to visit with the folks at Leggett and Platt in Monroe City to discuss job training dollars to make sure those dollars are meeting the needs of both employer and employee. I also toured the Continental Cement plant in Hannibal, which has the second longest kiln in the world. The company is planning a \$180 million expansion, which will make it viable for the next 40 years. Finally, I had the opportunity to speak to the Hannibal High School government class. I appreciate their interest and hope some of them will consider running for office some day.

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.