



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer
18th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
Week of April 07, 2008**

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

Education Issues

JEFFERSON CITY – We spent more time this week debating a school voucher bill that just won't seem to die. The legislation creates the Missouri Special Needs Scholarship Tax Credit Program, which sounds like a worthy program until you look at the fine print. This bill will divert scarce public resources from our public schools to private schools. If we allow this to happen and state funding falls off or has to be cut, many districts will be forced to ask for more resources locally. We should stand firm behind our public system to ensure they have the resources to meet our needs.

This week I also read an editorial in the St. Louis Post Dispatch from a Marshfield banker and 13-year member of the MOHELA Board of Directors regarding the dire financial situation of the student loan agency. John Greer says that he and many others spoke against the governor's plan to sell off most of MOHELA's assets to pay for new buildings on college campuses. Greer told lawmakers last year the asset sale would cripple MOHELA's ability to provide low-cost loans to Missouri students, which is why lawmakers created the agency. He also said MOHELA probably would not be able to make its quarterly payments to the state. Sadly, his predictions are coming true. More ominously, Greer says the student loan agency may not survive until the fall. I made similar arguments during the debate on MOHELA last year. It does not make any sense to build new buildings on college campuses if students can't afford to go to school.

Our office has been asked to submit the name of an "Unsung Hero" from the 18th Senatorial District for the 2009 Senate calendar. I'd like to ask for your help in nominating someone from northeast Missouri who has achieved, accomplished or overcome something remarkable in their lives, and has done so without accolades, fanfare or recognition from news

media, civic groups or officials. Please include the nominee's name and address, phone number and occupation, as well as a description of why this person is a Missouri Unsung Hero. Please include your name and contact information as well. The deadline for submissions is May 16.

We welcomed a lot of visitors to our capitol office this week, including folks with the collision repair industry, pharmacy students Jason Dodge of Paris and Ryan Davis of Mexico, Jim Ragland of Kirksville with the Missouri Health Council, and nuclear engineering students from the MU College of Engineering. The nuclear engineering program at MU is ranked number one in the nation, despite being housed in a 115-year old building. Again, it just proves my point that it is the minds of our students that are important, not the buildings where they study.

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.