



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of May 05, 2008**

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Horse Sense

JEFFERSON CITY – I know I have caused a lot of headaches for my colleagues this week by sponsoring a resolution urging Congress to support the continuation of horse processing in the United States. My colleagues have been fielding tons of angry phone calls and emails from animal rights activists all over the U.S. and even from foreign countries who are opposed to my resolution. While I believe their hearts are in the right place, I think these activists have done more harm than good by convincing Congress to suspend horse processing in this country.

If horse processing plants in this country are forced to close and export options are eliminated, the Horse Welfare Coalition estimates that an additional 90,000 to 100,000 unwanted horses would be exposed to abandonment and neglect each year. Those horses would compete for adoption with the 32,000 wild horses that U.S. taxpayers already are paying to shelter and feed. The Congressional Research Office has stated the nation's inadequate, overburdened and unregulated horse rescue and adoption facilities cannot handle the influx of some 60,000 or more additional horses each year that would result from a harvesting ban.

This ban eliminates a base market costing Missouri producers tens of millions of dollars by collapsing the market for all horses. I appreciate the Senate having the "horse sense" to overwhelmingly pass this resolution to send to Congress.

Senate Concurrent Resolution 35 just tells our federal government to reinstate funding so the processing plants can be inspected and we can resume the slaughter of horses. The folks who claim to be acting humanely by pressuring Congress to ban horse processing have not thought about what will happen to all of the unwanted horses, most of which will be abandoned and

neglected. I understand the passion of these animal rights activists, but good public policy is rarely made when emotions run high.

Veterinarians and animal nutritionists tell us that horse meat is the healthiest diet for big cats, rare birds and other zoo animals because equine protein mimics what the animal would receive in the wild.

We spent most of the week working on the budget bills that make up our state's \$22-billion dollar budget. This year's budget still does not restore healthcare services for the tens of thousands of Missourians who lost their healthcare in 2005, but we will keep trying to find a way to make sure Missouri families don't have to choose between putting food on their tables or getting the healthcare services they need. A few items in the FY 2009 budget that impact the 18th Senatorial District include \$1,144,180 for vocational education facilities in Hannibal, \$725,000 for vocational education facilities in Mexico, and \$296,000 to design and build a new commercial drivers license office in Hannibal.

We welcomed Ralls County Collector Connie Berry to our Capitol office this week. On a related note, we amended a House bill in the Senate that affects our county collectors. The amendment simply adds additional notice requirements and clarifies the tax sale process. This is the process the county collectors must go through when property taxes are delinquent. The rights and responsibilities of the property owners are spelled out, as well as the rights and responsibilities of the people bidding on the properties.

The General Assembly will adjourn for the year next Friday, May 16.

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.