



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of Dec. 01, 2008**

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Health Care & Retirement

JEFFERSON CITY – I want to remind folks that they have until the end of the month to enroll in Medicare or to change their current plans. Each year the health care plans change what they cost and what they cover. If you are currently enrolled in Medicare, now is the time to review the changes being made to your plan and compare it to others to make sure it still meets your needs. Folks who do not have a prescription drug coverage plan also can enroll in a drug plan during the annual open enrollment period, which runs through December 31.

This is also a good time to remind people that Medicare Advantage plans are not Medigap supplement plans. If you plan to sign up with a Medicare Advantage plan, make sure your local doctor has contracted with the Medicare Advantage plan to provide medical services.

My office has received a lot of calls lately regarding a new federal rule that will require some public school employees to pay into the state Public School Retirement System *and* Social Security while receiving reduced benefits. For decades, employees at Missouri's public schools have paid into the Public School Retirement System rather than Social Security. Now the bureaucrats in Washington, D.C. want to change their definition of the term "teacher" to exclude teacher's aides and other professionals who work in our public schools. If the rules are not changed, folks who have paid into the PSRS for years will now have to pay into Social Security as well, forcing them to deduct more money from their paychecks while receiving fewer benefits. In these tough economic times, this is a boneheaded move. Fortunately, this decision has been postponed for further study thanks to your phone calls and letters of concern.

However, I would encourage anyone who is concerned about these changes to contact their local member of Congress and to contact our U.S. Senators. They can be reached at the following numbers:

- Senator Christopher Bond
274 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.5721
Email: kit_bond@bond.senate.gov
- Senator Claire McCaskill
717 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
202.224.6154
Email: <http://mccaskill.senate.gov/contact.cfm>

There is no number available yet for Representative-Elect Blaine Luetkemeyer, who succeeds Kenny Hulshof as the 9th District Congressman.

Although we have been seeing a slowdown in the manufacturing and retail sectors of the economy, there are some bright spots of economic activity in northeast Missouri, including:

- ❖ Completion of Highway 36
- ❖ Proposed construction of a Life Sciences Center in Mexico
- ❖ Construction of a pipeline through the area that has boosted local economies
- ❖ Construction of a Highway 63 bypass in Kirksville
- ❖ Safe & Sound Bridge Program is replacing over 80 bridges in the 18th District
- ❖ Completion of the Avenue of the Saints – Highway 61 – this past summer

I am also pushing for the remodeling of the Pershing Building at Truman State University in Kirksville. Most of these are not flashy projects, but it is important infrastructure that we need when the economy does rebound to put our region in a good position for business.

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Clark County Indians on their 10-7 victory over Maryville in the Missouri Class 2A State Football Championship.

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.