



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
of January 7, 2008**

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# A Busy Session Begins

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JEFFERSON CITY — This past Wednesday, January 9<sup>th</sup>, lawmakers returned to the State Capitol for the annual ritual of opening the session of the Legislature. Many items are on our agendas this year, and with my elevation to chairman of the Senate Education Committee and vice chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee (plus assignments on the Agriculture, Conservation, Parks and Natural Resources; Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight; and Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committees), I will certainly have a full plate of my own. I'd like to take a few moments and discuss some of the hot topics I see for this new session.

One of the big issues this year will be illegal immigration. While Washington, D.C. has been unable or unwilling to stem the tide of illegal immigrants into this country, Missouri is refusing to sit still and allow the flow to become a tidal wave that suffocates our economy. One measure being proposed would be a three-pronged attack to our problem of illegal immigration, addressing individuals', the state government's, and private employers' roles in this issue. Those who hire illegal aliens would be held accountable for their actions, and we would enforce federal laws that keep illegal aliens from attending our state colleges and universities and receiving certain government benefits.

Another major issue I see for this session is property taxes. For too long, municipalities have gotten around state laws requiring a vote of the people for a tax increase by simply raising the valuation of a piece of property. These "back-door" tax increases are costing our taxpayers dearly without them having a say in the process. A measure pending this year would bring those

actions into the limelight and ensure you have input regarding how much the government can reach into your wallet. In addition, my [Senate Bill 805](#) would modify the definition of agricultural property for tax purposes.

The decision last year by the Missouri Supreme Court to allow collective bargaining for state employees left some ambiguity as to what that might mean for school teachers in Missouri. Since I am on both the Education and Judiciary Committees, I expect that we'll be hearing a lot on how lawmakers can clear up that issue during this session.

The growing problem of copper and aluminum theft, especially from the irrigation pivots of Southeast Missouri is another issue high on my list of priorities for this year. For a few dollars worth of scrap metal, thieves are costing our farmers thousands for each pivot they destroy. We need to give our law enforcement agencies the tools they need to stop this crime.

Of course, we'll have the perennial debates over education funding and how to take care of our citizens who just need a little help. I feel confident we can put together the programs you expect from state government while exercising good fiscal constraint. I'll keep you updated throughout the session on the status of these priorities and look forward to your feedback as the year moves along. Either contact me at my Capitol office at (573) 751-3859, in my district office at (573) 624-9331, or look for me around our area.

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*Senator Robert Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid, Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*