



MISSOURI SENATE

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JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Column for the Week
of February 4, 2008**

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New Era For Public School Collective Bargaining

JEFFERSON CITY — Last year, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled the state's public employees, including public school teachers, have the right to bargain collectively. The decision overturned a 60-year-old ruling and was the outcome of a case in Independence a few years ago when the Missouri National Education Association employee groups filed a lawsuit against their school district, which nullified the employees' contract. When the case went to the trial court in 2006, it was decided in favor of the district. The Independence MNEA groups then took their case to the Missouri Supreme Court.

In just a few days, I intend to introduce a bill that will create and implement an appropriate procedural framework for teaching groups and school districts involved in collective bargaining negotiations. As chair of the Senate Education Committee — and as a longtime supporter of quality education for ALL students in our state — I consider this legislation to be vitally important for elementary, secondary and junior college educators, their respective governing bodies, and for Missouri students — all of whom will reap the benefits of better working and learning conditions in our Missouri schools.

Under my proposal, teachers and education support professionals can form, join and participate in associations or other designated groups, with some exceptions. This bill allows for the creation of an employee representation council, consisting of representatives of any or all associations within a school district, which will work with school district administrators to resolve salary, benefits and other issues. If issues cannot be resolved mutually, disputes are settled by the State Board of Mediation, which will be given some oversight of the state's collective bargaining process. Any appeals are considered by a circuit

court. Other provisions of the bill include a six-month time limit to file claims, with some exceptions, and the prevention of strikes and lockouts.

I strongly believe this collective bargaining system will allow teachers and other school personnel a real voice at the bargaining table and I consider it an important step toward great public schools for Missouri students.

My Senate Bill 1034, which requires scrap metal dealers to obtain identification from those who sell them copper, aluminum and other semi-precious metals, was considered during a hearing last week by the Senate's Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee. We're one step closer to moving to the Senate floor for debate and are considering some slight changes, including requiring sellers to hold goods for 72 hours before selling and requiring vendors to pay sellers by check for purchases of \$50 or more to document purchases and to deter would-be thieves.

It's my privilege and honor to participate in a special recognition ceremony that names U.S. Highway 60 from State Route ZZ to State Highway 25 in Stoddard County the "Sergeant Carl Dewayne Graham, Jr., Memorial Highway." I sponsored a bill to name that portion of the highway in memory of Sgt. Graham, a local hero who was tragically killed in 2005 in the line of duty. The ceremony, to be held on Feb. 9 in Dexter, recognizes Graham's dedication, work and example in our community.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (573) 751-3859.

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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.