



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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### Families the Focus of Advancing Legislation

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JEFFERSON CITY — Following the mid-session break, the Senate returned to business this week and approved a wide variety of legislation. Among those bills that received first-round approval was my Senate Bill 967, which will allow the Higher Education Loan Authority of the State of Missouri (MOHELA) to be the originator, or serve as the original funding source for, any federally guaranteed student loans.

The measure will allow the state student loan organization to expand its offerings by allowing college students to choose MOHELA from among a list of lenders who offer federal Stafford loans. MOHELA, a secondary market that purchases student loans from lenders, is one of the only state-based student loan lending institutions in the country that does not originate, or serve as the original funding source for, federally-guaranteed Stafford loans. Federal student loans are generally the most affordable loans available to students with the best interest rates and deferred payments (principal and interest) until after graduation. This will level the playing field with student loan organizations from other states.

Several measures received full Senate approval this week and move to the House for similar consideration. Among them was a childcare bill (SB 726) that creates and implements a voluntary quality rating system for childcare providers. The bill also provides subsidies based upon the ratings. I voted in favor of this rating system that will assist parents with choosing childcare, which all parents know is not a simple or easy decision.

The Senate approved another important bill (SB 714), which strengthens sex offender laws, expands information included in the state's sex offender registry, and provides more protections for

children from sexual predators. As you may know, my bill (SB 754) that expands the state's DNA database to include DNA samples from certain juvenile offenders, received full Senate approval recently and is in the House for similar consideration. The Senate also gave first-round approval to a resolution that would require certain sex offender laws to be applied retrospectively. Upon voter approval, the legislation would amend the Missouri Constitution to require certain sex offenders to comply with the state's registry laws even if their offenses took place prior to the registry laws taking initial effect in 1995. Laws requiring sex offenders to live within a certain distance of a school or child-care facility and for felons to provide a DNA sample would also apply. I fully support these companion bills that will provide more protections for Missourians from sexual predators.

I also want to mention that the Senate passed a major supplemental budget bill for the session this week. This allocates additional funding to various state departments, agencies and programs through the rest of the fiscal year. Among those programs to receive the funding are the Foundation Formula for K-12 education, and the Sheltered Workshop Program, which provides employment within the private sector to people with disabilities.

I hope this week has been a better week for many of you who are still working to recover from last week's devastating flooding. I so appreciate the efforts of so many who brought much-needed relief to the residents of southeast Missouri during this difficult time and know we can all look forward to better days ahead.

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