

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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Hammering Out A Plan to Rebuild Storm-Damaged Schools

JEFFERSON CITY — It was just two years ago this week — April 2, 2006 — when an F3 tornado ripped through the community of Caruthersville in Pemiscot County and left more than 1,000 homes and businesses damaged or destroyed and ruined the high school. Since that time, high school students have been relocated to other school buildings and the school district continues to struggle to find the money to build a new facility to replace the three-story high school structure built during the 1920s.

This week, several residents and community leaders from the Caruthersville area gave testimony before the [Senate's Education Committee](#) — of which I am chair — in support of a bill I am introducing called the [Rebuild Missouri Schools Program](#). This measure would allow the state board of education to distribute no-interest loans with a 20-year repayment agreement to school districts, such as Caruthersville, that have school facilities within an area declared a disaster area by the governor or president that have experienced at pre-set level of damage or destruction as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) due to an act of God.

The community of Caruthersville is unique because it is located within the New Madrid Fault zone, requiring the school to be rebuilt to strict building codes in order to withstand an earthquake. Cost estimates for rebuilding the school are more than double what the insurance company is willing to pay.

During the hearing, we watched a short film that included many heartbreaking images taken from the high school following the aftermath of the devastating storm.

Even today, students are required to gather in a cramped area outside the building ruins as they wait to be dismissed to scattered areas of the school. It's a tough scene to witness.

As the school district struggles to rebuild the school — something that is vitally important for the community of Caruthersville — I want to be able to provide them with this kind of safety net to help cushion the financial blow from this catastrophic event. Equipping school districts with the means to recover and rebuild following a natural catastrophe is the right thing to do and I will work with my Senate colleagues to advance this bill, which will greatly benefit school districts in southeastern Missouri and across the state that incur devastating property losses associated with catastrophic events.

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