



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott
28th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
Week of January 14, 2008**

**Contact: Debbie Poire
(573) 751-8793**

The State of the State is Strong

JEFFERSON CITY – This week Governor Matt Blunt delivered his annual State of the State address to a joint session of the Missouri General Assembly, and I fully concur with the governor's optimistic message about the direction of our state. As the governor reported, our economy is growing, our schools are improving, our health care system has been transformed for the better, and indeed, the state of our state is strong.

While we have made great strides in the past three years, a number of challenges remain that lawmakers will address during the 2008 legislative session. For example, it is imperative that we tackle the growing problem of illegal immigration since the federal government has been unable to reach a consensus on this issue. We owe the residents of Missouri our best effort to protect their safety, jobs and benefits, rather than reward illegal immigrants with jobs and public support at the taxpayers' expense. Several bills dealing with illegal immigration are moving forward in committee and will receive a thorough airing on the Senate floor later in the session.

We have begun to transform our state healthcare system from one that focuses on sickness and treatment to a system that promotes wellness and prevention. We must continue to work to ensure Missourians can find and afford health insurance through a marketplace that allows them to make the best healthcare decisions for their families.

Education continues to be our highest priority and I support the governor's call to increase funding for all levels – from pre-school to graduate school. We have already increased our total investment in education by \$1.2 billion dollars, and we must do more to promote skills in math, engineering, technology and science so our citizens can compete in our technology-driven

economy. The changes we have implemented are bearing fruit – our elementary students posted significant gains in the 2007 school year on national math tests, while our high school students beat the national average on the ACT exam last year.

We continue to promote and support Missouri’s family farmers by creating new markets for corn producers through our ethanol policy, and will debate legislation this session to add biodiesel to the mix of alternative fuels that help reduce our reliance on foreign sources of oil.

Finally, we have protected Missouri taxpayers by cutting taxes on Missouri seniors through the Senior Tax Justice Act, which will end state taxation of Social Security benefits. We must take steps, however, to ensure Missouri will never have taxes imposed by judges. We also must take steps to reform the property assessment process, which has become a back door way of increasing taxes on homeowners.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons noted during his opening day address that pundits predict little will be accomplished this session since it’s an election year. But I believe, as Senator Gibbons does, that by working together on the issues important to Missourians we can put the people of Missouri first and help improve the lives of the people we serve.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.gov