



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Delbert Scott  
28<sup>th</sup> Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 416  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

A Weekly Column for the  
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Contact: Debbie Poire  
(573) 751-8793

# Committee Hears Bill To Improve Rural Health Care

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JEFFERSON CITY – As I mentioned last week, much of the heavy lifting in the Missouri Senate is taking place in committee hearing rooms throughout the Capitol. Eventually, many of the bills heard in committee will move to the Senate floor for debate by all 34 members. By the time many bills reach the floor, they have been amended or rewritten completely. I'm hopeful that does not happen to Senate Bill 724, which I presented to the Senate Financial & Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee this week.

SB 724 authorizes Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) to prescribe schedule II, III, IV or V controlled substances. In other words, when you go in to see the doctor, these qualified professionals would be allowed to prescribe the medicines you need. This is extremely important in both rural and urban environments. APRNs with prescriptive authority will be able to supplement the shortage of doctors in rural areas. This new authority would also allow quicker treatment to patients when doctors are unavailable in medically underserved areas, both urban and rural.

This legislation is also needed to correct an inadvertent consequence of an anti-methamphetamine measure passed in 2005. That bill prohibited the over-the-counter sale of medicines containing pseudoephedrine, an element commonly used to make meth. Now customers must go to the pharmacy to obtain these medicines, which are used to treat cold and allergy symptoms.

However, the legislation implementing this new law contained language prohibiting APRNs from writing prescriptions for medicines containing pseudoephedrine. This oversight needs to be corrected.

Under SB 724, doctors retain oversight of the APRNs' new prescriptive authorities. The bill requires collaborative practice agreements among doctors and nurses, so doctors can restrict nurses' prescribing capabilities if they so choose. In other words, doctors retain their ability to oversee the actions of APRNs.

In many rural areas of Missouri, where it can be difficult to find a hospital or a doctor, advanced practice nurses often handle the routine health care needs of local citizens. Approving SB 724 would be one small step toward more affordable, efficient health care delivery.

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.state.mo.us](mailto:delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us).

*Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.*