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**A Weekly Column for the
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Celebrating Labor Day and Honoring Missouri's Workers

It started with an American who proposed an idea for a holiday honoring our country's workers at a labor meeting in early 1882. The first Labor Day celebration in our nation was initiated by Peter J. McGuire, a carpenter and labor union leader. One year before putting his holiday plan into action, McGuire co-founded the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, a precursor of the American Federation of Labor.

New York's Central Labor Union quickly approved McGuire's proposal and began planning events to celebrate workers on the second Tuesday in September. The September date was suggested because it was thought Americans needed a break during the long time span between Independence Day and Thanksgiving.

On September 5, 1882, approximately 10,000 devoted workers gathered in New York City to participate in our nation's first Labor Day parade — starting at city hall and ending at Union Square. After the parade, workers and their families congregated in Reservoir Park for a picnic, concert, and a variety of speeches. While the first Labor Day was held on a Tuesday, the new-found holiday was soon moved to the first Monday in September, the date we continue to honor today.

New York's Labor Day celebrations inspired several similar events across the United States. Oregon became the first state to grant legal status for the holiday in 1887 and other states soon followed. Finally, in 1894, Congress passed legislation making the day we honor workers across the country a national holiday.

For years, Labor Day was used by workers in our country not only to celebrate and highlight their dedication and accomplishments, but also used this occasion to discuss ways in which to secure better working conditions and salaries. Today, Labor Day has moved away from a time where workers would air their grievances and participate in activities such as protest marches. Now, the holiday is more associated with a day away from the workplace to enjoy leisure activities — family picnics, sporting events, and utilizing the summer season's last days of fun and excitement.

My colleagues and I in the Missouri General Assembly worked hard during the 2008 session to draft legislation important for working citizens across our state. [House Bill 2041](#) is comprehensive legislation making changes to laws regarding employment. The measure was signed by the governor in June and most provisions in [House Bill 2041](#) took affect with a majority of other bills on August 28.

Disclosure of Confidential Information

According to [House Bill 2041](#), the Division of Employment Security within the [Department of Labor and Industrial Relations](#) may disclose confidential information obtained from any employing unit or individual regarding employment records required by the division in the administration of the Missouri Employment Security Law to a state or federal official or agency as required by law. Any person who intentionally discloses or otherwise fails to protect confidential information in violation of these provisions will be guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

Vocational and Technical Education

The bill replaces the Director of the Division of Employment Security with the Director of the Division of Workforce Development — a part of the Department of Economic Development — in the cooperative capacity with the Commissioner of Education to continue to provide grants to certain public schools for new programs, curriculum enhancement, equipment, and facilities in order to upgrade vocational and technical education in Missouri.

Unemployment Compensation for War on Terror Veterans

[House Bill 2041](#) also applies to a Missouri resident who is a member of a United States armed forces reserve unit or the National Guard located outside of Missouri stateliness. The bill will allow those who qualify as a War on Terror veteran to receive veteran’s unemployment benefits.

Overtime Pay

The bill re-enacts the federal overtime standard in effect prior to the passage of Proposition B in 2006 regarding the minimum wage increase including, but not limited to, the exemptions for firefighters, commissioned employees, and flex-time pay rate employees.

If you have questions or comments about labor, management, or workers’ compensation legislation as well as any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at:

delbertscott@senate.mo.gov. However you decide to spend the holiday, I hope you have a fun and safe Labor Day.

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

