



MISSOURI SENATE
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**A Weekly Column for the
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Committee Work Continues Throughout the Interim

Typically, most committee work performed by lawmakers occurs during the time when the General Assembly is in session. However, several committees have been hard at work during the interim — the time between legislative sessions — tackling issues important to Missourians throughout the state.

Joint Committee on Preneed Funeral Contracts

Lawmakers were recently appointed to serve on the [Joint Committee on Preneed Funeral Contracts](#). I was named the chair of the newly-created joint committee, established as a provision of [Senate Bill 788](#), which was signed by the governor in July and became effective August 28. The committee, made up of seven members of the Senate and seven members of the House of Representatives, was created to make a comprehensive study and analysis of the consumer and economic impact on the preneed funeral contract industry in Missouri. The committee is also charged with determining the need for changes in statutory law regarding preneed funeral contracts, as well as making any other recommendations to the General Assembly relating to its findings.

Many states regulate preneed funeral contracts. These regulations grant citizens certain rights as consumers. Prepaying for funerals in advance, often called pre-need, is what sparks many of these state regulations. Traditionally, regulating the sale of these contracts and agreements is more complicated than regulating the sale of other types of consumer products.

Even though more and more Missourians are making advanced funeral plans for themselves and loved ones in order to ease the burden and relieve unwanted stress at a time of grief for family and friends, the biggest complication with these contracts deals with the length of time between signing the agreement and the need for the services in the contract. A full report of the joint committee's recommendations will be submitted to the General Assembly by January 21, 2009.

Joint Interim Committee on Voice Communications Regulations

Competition in the voice communications industry is developing rapidly and this form of communication — whether it be through traditional wire, wireless, cable, or interconnected voice over Internet protocol (VOIP) industries — can be found in every corner of our state. Our state's law governing the telecommunications industry needs to evolve to meet the needs of Missouri consumers.

Making the necessary changes to meet the needs of our citizens in these communication areas will require a comprehensive and deliberate approach. The [Joint Interim Committee on Voice Communications Regulations](#) has been created to review and discuss complex issues that are found in this competitive industry. A total of ten committee members, five members from the Senate and five members of the House of Representatives, will work to address the concerns of both the telecommunications industry and its consumers. The committee will prepare a final report, including its recommendations for any legislative action deemed necessary for submission to the General Assembly, by January 15, 2009.

Senate Select Committees

Two Senate Select Committees have been created to address important issues affecting Missourians. Select Committees are different than other established committees. Its members are appointed to perform a special function that is beyond the authority or capacity of a regular committee. And select committees are usually created by a resolution that outlines its duties and powers.

The [Senate Select Committee on the Missouri Housing Trust Fund](#) was created to examine ways to improve and increase funding for the Missouri Housing Trust Fund — a state resource that provides grants to organizations offering housing assistance to very low-income families and individuals. By establishing this committee, new ideas can be brought forward in order to better supplement the trust fund and offer common sense solutions to incredibly complex issues.

The [Senate Select Committee on Mo HealthNet Provider Rate Equalization](#) has been charged with determining if it is possible to apply an objective standard to all Mo HealthNet provider reimbursement rates and how such a standard should be applied.

Both Senate Select Committees will issue a report including the findings and recommendations to the Missouri Senate no later than Jan. 1, 2009.

If you have questions or comments about any of the legislative committees in the General Assembly, 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.

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

