



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of May 19, 2008

A Successful Session

On May 16th, the 2008 legislative session concluded. A total of 138 bills were sent to the governor for his signature. Here are just a few of the bill we successfully passed:

Ethan's Law

In July of 2007, Ethan Cory drowned at the Swimmin' Hole in Joplin during a trip with the Boys and Girls Club. The park did not have liability insurance, and thus did not have any sort of oversight because it was outside of a municipality and was privately owned. After their son's death, John and Lauren Cory worked with local lawmakers to require tougher rules for privately owned water parks. I was proud to play a part in the passage of [House Bill 1341](#). The legislation requires water parks to carry liability insurance. Owners that do not insure their parks could be charged with a Class A misdemeanor and be subject to a fine of \$250 per day of violation. Insurance companies underwriting these liability policies would then require parks to follow regulated safety precautions.

Property Tax Reform

[Senate Bill 711](#) will offer relief from rising property taxes caused by reassessment. The legislation requires tax rate roll backs; closes a loophole in the law that allows taxing districts to apply new voter-approved levies to future and unknown assessments; requires that taxpayers receive a projected tax liability statement along with their reassessment notices; and increases the Senior Citizen Property Tax Credit award from \$750 to \$1,100 for homeowners and expands the program's eligibility.

Curbing Illegal Immigration

[House Bill 1549](#) tackles illegal immigration on several fronts, primarily as it relates to employers who hire undocumented workers. Missouri employers are barred from hiring illegal immigrants and could lose permits or licenses if they knowingly employ illegal workers. To be eligible for state contracts, employers must participate in a federal work authorization program, including public employers. Employers who misclassify workers will be subject to penalties of \$50 per day per misclassified worker and up to a

maximum of \$50,000 in fines. Other reforms contained in the bill prohibit communities from adopting safe sanctuary policies for illegal immigrants, bar individuals from transporting or harboring any illegal immigrant, require written tests for commercial licenses to be administered in English only and provide penalties for individuals who use fraudulent means to assist illegal immigrants in obtaining driver's licenses.

Safe Service for the Developmentally Disabled

[Senate Bill 1081](#), which I sponsored, standardizes and supports quality assurance and safety for facilities and programs serving the disabled in our state. The first provision of SB 1081 adds mental health workers to the Family Care Safety Registry, making it possible for families to get background information on these workers before placing a developmentally disabled family member in their care. Another provision in the bill requires direct care staff from the Division of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MRDD) to report suspected abuse in the same manner as physicians, nurses, and psychologists are already required to do. The Missouri Department of Mental Health also maintains a list called the Disqualification Registry, and SB 1081 requires any employee of a group home or residential facility for the developmentally disabled that has been placed on this list to be terminated. Another important part of SB 1081 standardizes the regulations and training for all group homes and residential facilities for the developmentally disabled.

Another provision of SB 1081 would implement a provider assessment on intermediate care facilities similar to the fee currently placed on hospitals, pharmacies, nursing homes and Medicaid-managed care organizations. The funds collected by this fee could draw an estimated 2.7 million in additional federal dollars, the bulk of which will be used to strengthen quality assurance and safety efforts by adding approximately 56 staff members responsible for quality assurance of MRDD community providers. (Private facilities that fall under MRDD will receive fee reimbursements.)

I am pleased with the progress we made this session and look forward to a productive interim. I will suspend these weekly columns over the interim until December when bill filing begins, but I will continue to issue news releases as events and items of interest arise.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*