



STATE SENATOR ROBIN WRIGHT-JONES



2009 LEGISLATIVE NEWSLETTER — DISTRICT 5

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SERVING CITIZENS
OF ST. LOUIS CITY IN THE
MISSOURI SENATE

A PRODUCTIVE SESSION FOR THE MISSOURI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

My colleagues and I in the Legislature worked through the final hour of the legislative session to pass beneficial measures for the citizens of our state. Three of the 2009 legislative session's top priorities — education legislation, crime prevention measures, and a bill designed to boost our state's economy— were delivered to the governor for his signature.

EDUCATION

The Legislature passed a comprehensive education bill that properly distributes revenue to our state's public schools and creates programs that benefit cadets, help students graduate on time, and create teaching standards. You can read more about this education measure, Senate Bill 291, on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter.

CRIME

Another priority for the Legislature during the 2009 legislative session was passing a crime bill for the citizens of our state. For the first time in recent years, we were able to deliver to the governor a bill that requires businesses to notify Missourians if their personal information is stolen or compromised; prohibits those 21 and younger from texting while driving on Missouri roads; bans the use of false or misleading college degrees in connection with employment; and prohibits the possession or use of devices intended for the rapid consumption of alcohol and bans large volume alcohol containers on most of Missouri's rivers. The measure also creates penalties for the owners of dogs that injure people and establishes an absolute defense against civil or criminal liability for defending yourself or others against a threatening dog.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By far, the most debated topic this legislative session was how to boost economic development in our state. House Bill 191 addresses this issue by strengthening our state's economy while instituting tax credit reform. The measure increases the annual cap on the Quality Jobs program from \$60 to \$80 million and increases the annual cap on the Business Use Incentives for Large-Scale Development (BUILD) Tax Credit and New Markets Tax Credit programs from \$15 million to \$25 million. The bill also expands the eligibility for the Neighborhood Assistance program, which enables community-based organizations to implement projects in the areas of community service, education, crime prevention, job training, and physical revitalization.

Tax credit reform is also a large component of the bill, which contains a provision that limits the amount of tax credits the Missouri Development Finance Board can issue in a calendar year without outside approval at \$10 million, while instituting a hard cap of \$25 million, regardless of approval. House Bill 191 also caps Historic Preservation Tax Credits and requires tax credit recipients to report any jobs created resulting from the use of tax credits. Also, tax credit information must be made available to the public on the Missouri Department of Economic Development's website (www.ded.mo.gov) and through the Missouri Accountability Portal (www.mapyourtaxes.mo.gov). To read more about Historic Preservation Tax Credits, go to page 7.

OTHER NOTABLE LEGISLATION

More than 575 measures were filed in the Senate during the 2009 legislative session. Throughout the session, lawmakers worked diligently to serve their constituents in their districts.

One of the bills I sponsored this session, Senate Bill 179, authorizes the governor to transfer a plot of land now being used by the Department of Corrections to the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission. This land conveyance is a crucial element in paving the way for the new Mississippi River Bridge project in St. Louis.

Senate Bill 147 (later vetoed by the governor) would have required the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Health to develop the Missouri Healthy Workplace Recognition Program for the purpose of granting official state recognition to employers with more than 50 employees for excellence in promoting health, wellness, and prevention.

A bill relating to crime victims, Senate Bill 338, establishes procedures for the compensation of forensic examinations for sexual assault victims.

And in an effort to promote energy conservation in our state, Senate Bill 376 allows electric companies to implement and recover costs for developing energy efficiency programs.

ST. LOUIS METRO: METROBUS, METROLINK, AND METRO CALL-A-RIDE

Many lawmakers, including myself, have used the Metro to get to work, appointments, meetings, and special events. I've been known to ride the Metro to and from ball games downtown.

Several MetroBus routes have been designed to provide faster, more streamlined service for long-distance trips, while other routes have been added to facilitate peak hours of service. And for those who are visiting the St. Louis area, a route has been created to help conventioners and tourists visit St. Louis' popular attractions, including the City Museum, Grand Center, and the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Metro Link operates six trips per hour on routes running from Lambert International Airport and Shrewsbury on the west to just past Bellville, Illinois, on the east. MetroLink ridership allows for the removal of approximately 1,636 cars per hour from our highway system in each direction. Nine MetroLink stations were recently included to expand Metro's reach across the St. Louis area.

And for mobility-challenged citizens, there is Call-A-Ride, Metro's paratransit service. Call-A-Ride is a curb-to-van service provided by reservation that makes more than 55,000 trips each month to customers with disabilities in our state.

IMPROVING AND EXPANDING ST. LOUIS-AREA MASS TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS



This year I filed a bill that would have included public mass transportation systems as allowable projects within transportation development districts. TDDs are formed to develop, improve, maintain, and operate transportation-related projects relative to the needs of those within the district's boundaries. Projects within a TDD can take many forms, from roadways and bridges to bus stops and light rail.

My legislation, Senate Bill 477, would have amended the Missouri Transportation Development District Act to include mass transportation systems, which are widely used by citizens in the St. Louis area. The measure would have also created a "Transportation Development District Sales Tax Trust Fund" as a separate account in which designated sales tax revenues generated by these particular types of TDDs would be deposited. Senate Bill 477 stalled in the Senate, however, I will continue to push for further public mass transportation improvements in the St. Louis area.

Mass transportation continues to grow in popularity. There are several forms of public mass transportation in the St. Louis metropolitan region operating under the "Metro" banner, including MetroBus, MetroLink light rail, and the Metro Call-A-Ride paratransit system. These services provide freedom and mobility to those who would not or might not otherwise be able to move from place to place on their own. For more information on Metro's services, please visit www.metrostlouis.org or call (314) 231-2345. You can also e-mail questions to transitinformation@metrostlouis.org.

It makes sense to extend the reach of the diverse array of public mass transit options to our region of the state, which was the intent of Senate Bill 477. I plan on filing similar legislation for the 2010 legislative session, which would make a far-reaching impact on this particular portion of St. Louis. Broadening the ways mass transit can be expanded broadens the opportunities of the masses.

FUTURE OF THE CLASSROOM

LEGISLATION IMPROVES EDUCATION IN MISSOURI

On the last day of the 2009 legislative session, my colleagues and I in the General Assembly were able to pass a comprehensive measure that benefits educators and students throughout our state.

Senate Bill 291 started out as a single provision allowing school districts to offer virtual courses and receive state funding. Now the bill does much more for education in Missouri.

Senate Bill 291:

- Provides that all revenue collected from the repeal of the casino loss limits be deposited into the Classroom Trust Fund and then be dispersed to schools across our state, ensuring that the money voters intended for public schools to receive is properly distributed.
- Establishes the P-20 Council as a private, not-for-profit entity on behalf of the state with the purpose of creating a more efficient and effective education system to better prepare students for entering the workforce.
- Creates the Missouri Senior Cadets Program, which will provide opportunities for 12th graders in public schools to mentor kindergarten through eighth grade students.
- Establishes the School Flex Program to allow eligible students to pursue a timely graduation from high school.
- Creates the Persistence to Graduation Fund and establishes a procedure for school districts to apply for grants to implement drop-out prevention strategies.
- Allows school districts to maintain permanent records in a digital or electronic format.
- Requires each public school to develop standards for teaching by June 10, 2010.
- Develops "The Parents' Bill of Rights" to inform parents of children with an individualized education program of their



educational rights under law.

- Allows school boards to establish a four-day school week instead of a five-day school week by a majority vote of board members.

A measure that I sponsored in the Senate was included as a provision in Senate Bill 291. My provision creates physical education requirements for sixth through twelfth grades.

According to data collected by the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, our state's children and adolescents are above the national norm in regards to being overweight.

In Missouri, 18.6 percent of adolescents screened were overweight, compared to the national average of 14 percent overweight adolescents ages 12-19 in 1999. And the percent of overweight children appears to be increasing among students ages 5-11, which is consistent with national trends.

In the 1999-2000 school year, 19.4 percent of Missouri students who were screened were overweight. The very next school year, the percentage increased to 21.5 percent.

Most students are not meeting the recommended number of servings from the meat, bread and cereal,



and vegetable groups laid out in the National Food Guide Pyramid, and less than 50 percent of students are meeting the recommended daily allowances of calcium, iron, zinc, and folate.

Staying on top of our state's childhood obesity epidemic is important if we want to see our children reach their full potential. Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, my provision in Senate Bill 291 will:

- Ensure that students in elementary schools participate in moderate physical activity for the entire school year for an average of 150 minutes per week, or 30 minutes per day.
- Middle school students may, at the school's discretion, participate in at least 225 minutes of physical activity per week.
- Elementary school students must be provided a minimum of one recess period of 20 minutes per day, which can be incorporated into the lunch period.
- Students with disabilities must participate to the extent appropriate.

Most provisions in Senate Bill 291 became law on August 28.

BRINGING MISSOURI'S PATERNITY LAW INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

A bill that addresses our state's outdated paternity law was passed by the General Assembly and signed by the governor this year. Senate Bill 141, a bill I signed on to co-sponsor, addresses the growing problem of mistaken paternity, which occurs all too often across our state. According to the Department of Social Services - Family Support Division, approximately 34,000 children were born out of wedlock in our state in 2008 (totaling 40 percent of all births in Missouri last year).

In many cases, a paternity test is required to establish who fathered a child. Sometimes, this process can release the man who was thought to be the child's father from parental responsibilities. Before passage of Senate Bill 141, our state laws had not caught up with the advances of DNA technology. If a man contested that he was not the child's father, and even had DNA testing to prove that he did not father the child, there were still instances in our state when this individual was unable to receive justice in a court of law, therefore causing a major roadblock in this man's life.

Without this new law, he could not force the mother to produce the child for DNA testing, he was unable to have his child support eliminated, he could not get any convictions resulting from criminal non-support eliminated from his record, and his requests to have the child's birth certificate altered by removing his name from the legal document would be denied.

During emotional testimony on Senate Bill 141 in the Senate General Laws Committee, a Missouri father testified before lawmakers that he had been paying child support for many years for a child that was established by DNA testing as not his own. He was paying for this child because he could not get a judge to overturn his original judgement handed out so many years ago, despite the DNA testing results.

With this new law in place, lawmakers are sending a strong and clear message to our state's court system. Men should not have to pay child support for a child who has been proven by DNA testing to not be their own. My colleagues and I were able to right a wrong that has gone on for far too long in our state.

BUDGET ITEMS FOR THE 5TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

The projects below are included in the FY 2010 operating budget regarding education, health care services, and historic sites, parks, and other recreational items for the St. Louis area.

- \$674.5 million - K-12 public schools
- \$50.1 million - St. Louis Community College
- \$20.3 million - St. Louis Psychiatric Rehabilitation Center
- \$18.6 million - St. Louis Developmental Disabilities Treatment Center
- \$17.7 million - Bellefontaine Habilitation Center
- \$16.2 million - St. Louis Veterans Home
- \$15.1 million - Metro St. Louis Psychiatric Center
- \$12 million - Regional Convention & Sports Complex Authority (Dome)
- \$10.9 million - Harris-Stowe State University*
- \$4 million - St. Louis Community Release Center*
- \$3.2 million - St. Louis Regional Center*
- \$1.8 million - Juvenile Court Personnel Reimbursement - St. Louis City*
- \$257,614 - Route 66 State Park
- \$223,722 - Scott Joplin House State Historic Site*
- \$201,372 - First Missouri State Capitol State Historic Site

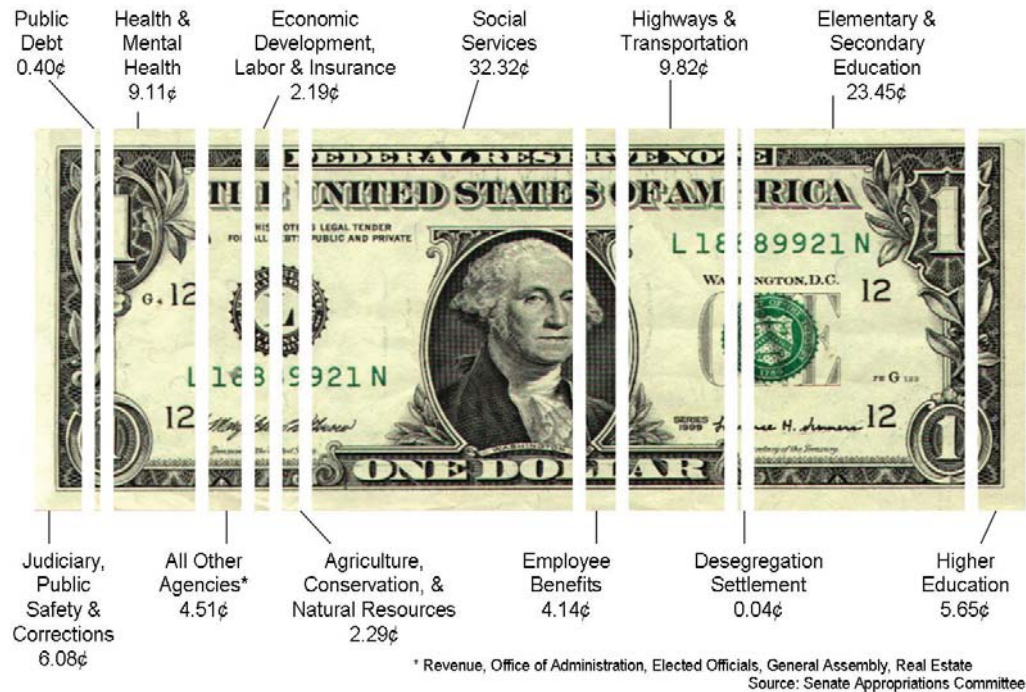
(* denotes projects within the 5th Senatorial District)

BUDGETING FOR MISSOURI'S FUTURE

DISTRIBUTION OF EACH TAX DOLLAR

FY 2010 AFTER VETO MISSOURI OPERATING BUDGET

All Funds: \$23.087 Billion



Work on our state's FY 2010 operating budget began back in December 2008. House Bills 1-13 make up Missouri's budget and each of these budget bills contain different state departments and programs. These constitutionally mandated bills range from tackling our public debt to providing funding for education and transportation in our state.

The Senate Appropriations Committee is charged with working with these important budget items. Hundreds of hours have been spent by committee members on our FY 2010 state budget since late last year. Members worked hard to calculate how each department and program would receive its state funding.

This year, safeguards were set in place to make sure every penny received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is accounted for. Senate Bill 313 creates two separate funds within our state treasury to receive and retain these specific funds. Any money our state receives that is marked to replace general revenue is deposited into the "Federal Budget Stabilization Fund." Additional funds received under the act are deposited into the "Federal Stimulus Fund."

Tough economic times in our state reflected how my colleagues in the House and Senate debated how our state's dollars were going to be spent. The General Assembly had to be resourceful in determining how to fund projects that benefit those who live, work, and visit our state.

Above, you can find a graphic representing how each of your state tax dollars are spent. And to the left, you can view a list of budget items for the 5th Senatorial District and the surrounding St. Louis area.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS: HOW THESE TAX CREDITS BENEFIT THE 5TH SENATORIAL DISTRICT

During the 2009 legislative session, you could hardly read through a newspaper or visit a news organization’s website without reading something about historic preservation tax credits. These two little words — tax credits — have been brought to the forefront of today’s political headlines. I cannot stress how important these tax credits are, not only for the citizens in my district, but for our state as a whole.

Historic preservation tax credits have been around since 1976, when the federal government started to provide these tax incentives for historic preservation. Missouri has offered its own historic preservation tax credit since Jan. 1, 1998. With federal and state tax credits available to our citizens, numerous regions of our state were able to provide a boost for their historic areas — including the 5th Senatorial District.

After the introduction of Missouri tax credits for historic preservation in 1998, rehabilitation using the federal tax credits doubled, according to the National Park Service’s FY 2004 annual report regarding tax incentives. Federal and state credits can be used in combination for rehabilitation of commercial or income-producing properties. Rehabilitation of non-income-producing residential properties only qualify for state tax credits.

So what exactly is a tax credit? A tax credit lowers the tax owed. This is different from a tax deduction, which lowers the amount of income subject to taxation. For example, a dollar of tax credits reduces the income tax owed by one dollar. With state and federal tax rehabilitation credits at our fingertips, developers from other states are attracted to what Missouri has to offer in terms of restoring historic buildings throughout our state.

There are more than 500 sites in the St. Louis area alone on the National Register of Historic places (www.nps.gov/nr). This register includes districts, specific sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant to American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and our nation’s culture. Without the help of historic preservation tax credits, individuals in our state would not have the resources to provide others with the understanding and the importance of historic locations in our district as well as throughout our state, which has more than 1,940 listings on the national register.

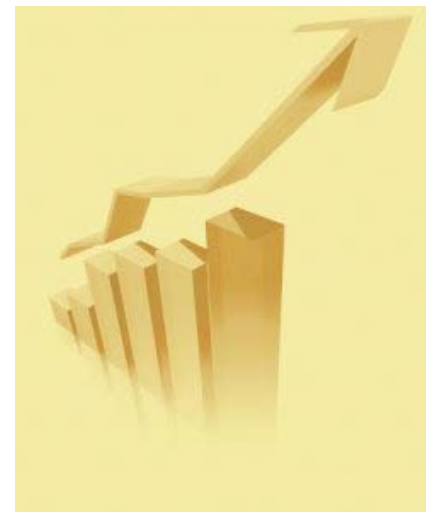
The historic preservation tax credit program provides Missouri’s citizens with a true value of our state’s history and historic properties. The program also grants Missourians a tool to attract heritage tourism in our state, which can result in new jobs and added revenue for the individual municipalities, counties, and ultimately, our entire state.

The Department of Natural Resources’ State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) works with our state’s property owners, developers, and architects in order to promote the incentives of historic preservation and provide advice on rehabilitation. If you would like more information on historic preservation tax credits and what the SHPO can provide for you, please visit the department’s website at www.dnr.mo.gov/shpo. This site will point you to applications for tax certification, information about the review process for state and federal historic rehabilitation tax credit projects, and other helpful links.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic development was perhaps the most revisited topic during the 2009 legislative session. The General Assembly sent House Bill 191 to the governor, who signed the measure in June.

The bill contains several provisions designed to create jobs and spur economic development while instituting tax credit changes in our state.



Some of these provisions include increasing the cap on the Quality Jobs program from \$60 to \$80 million annually; expanding the eligibility for the Neighborhood Assistance program; and capping historic preservation tax credits at \$140 million annually. However, smaller projects (receiving less than \$275,000 in tax credits) are not included in the cap amount.

To read more provisions included in this bill, visit www.senate.mo.gov, click on “Search for a Bill,” and type in “SB191.”



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Senator Wright-Jones' Legislative Committees and Commissions:

- Administration
- Financial and Governmental Organizations and Elections
- Gubernatorial Appointments
- Veterans' Affairs, Pensions and Urban Affairs
- Ways and Means
- Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee
- Job Creation 2020 Committee
- Joint Committee on Corrections
- Joint Committee on Tax Policy
- Joint Committee on Legislative Research
- Joint Interim Committee on Oversight of Federal Stimulus and Stabilization Funds
- Health Facilities Review Committee
- Missouri Film Commission
- Missouri Minority Business Advocacy Commission

LAWMAKERS CONVENE FOR ANNUAL VETO SESSION AT CAPITOL

The Missouri General Assembly returned to the State Capitol in mid-September for its annual veto session. Veto session is required by our state's constitution if the governor vetoes any bills passed during the year's legislative session.

This year, the governor vetoed 12 Senate bills, 11 House bills, and made line item vetoes in 11 budget bills. My colleagues and I gathered to consider these measures though, ultimately, did not successfully vote to overturn any of the vetoes.

To see a complete list of the bills vetoed by the governor, you can visit www.senate.mo.gov, click on "Session Information," and then on "Governor's Action on Truly Agreed Bills."

A two-thirds majority vote from both



the Senate and House chambers is required to override a governor's veto. Successfully overturning a veto in the Missouri Legislature is rare.

In fact, the General Assembly has not overridden a veto since 2003 when lawmakers voted to overturn three vetoes, ultimately allowing Missourians to carry concealed weapons, barring lawsuits against gun manufacturing companies, and requiring a waiting period for certain medical procedures.