



Seminars Put Spotlight on Key Legislative Issues

JEFFERSON CITY — The Missouri Senate is hosting a series of seminars in mid-January on a wide variety of issues and topics that will affect the state Legislature this year. The seminars have been very informative and helpful, particularly for new senators, and are helping all of us get a comprehensive view of the latest developments and challenges of many Missouri industries.

So far, we've heard from experts in the fields of energy, life sciences, and insurance. The energy seminar focused on the state's current and future energy policy. Among the issues highlighted were AmerenUE's efforts to build a second nuclear plant in Callaway County. As many of you know, AmerenUE is asking the General Assembly to repeal a voter-approved law that bans utilities constructing plants from increasing utility fees to customers until they receive the energy. Nuclear power is the most cost-efficient and cost-effective way to produce energy, experts agreed, but the vast majority of energy production in the state currently comes from coal. Missouri is also a large exporter of coal, which helps keep usage rates low. Coal industry experts shared how carbon capture and storage technology is a top environmental concern and what they are going to do to reduce carbon emissions.

In addition, wind and solar power advocates highlighted Missouri's unique capability for wind and solar power. Missouri's renewable energy efforts were also explored, and more requests were made for adopting "green" policies, such as the ones passed by the General Assembly in 2007 and 2008. Seminar speakers also called attention to the possible impact of any proposed climate legislation.

The life sciences seminar was equally informative. You may not be aware that the western and northwestern parts of our state are home to a large number of animal health and nutrition companies and several cutting-edge research facilities. Animal health professionals suggested that establishing a member of the governor's Cabinet to manage science and technology within the administration could help in forming a state mission, plus encouraged investments to grow the life sciences industry. Experts pointed to a successful state investment in Kansas that led to the location of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility in Manhattan, Kan.

The third seminar completed dealt with insurance. Experts shared information on the number of uninsured people in various geographical areas across the state and suggested ways of making insurance a more affordable option.

The remaining seminars will cover transportation, agriculture, education, economic development, and higher education. I am eager to attend each of these sessions as well.

If you have a question, concern, or input on any of the Senate seminar topics discussed, I encourage you to contact my office at (866) 271-2844 or one of my District coordinators: Matt Lindewirth at (636) 345-0911 (St. Charles County) or Beverly Steiniger at (314) 229-3876 (Lincoln County).

In addition, I want to also encourage you to track any proposed legislation that is of interest to you during this legislative session by logging onto the Senate's website at www.senate.mo.gov.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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