



Senator Highlights Measures Set to Become Law

JEFFERSON CITY — Summer marks the time when legislation from the recent legislative session is signed into law, and — as of July 14 — any legislation that has not been vetoed will become effective on Aug. 28 or sooner if it contains an emergency clause. This was a unique year unlike any other that I have experienced in Jefferson City, with the challenges of the economy, but one in which I am very pleased legislators worked together to pass crucial jobs legislation and many progressive measures to benefit Missouri citizens.

More than a dozen of my own proposals succeeded this year — ranging from expanding the New Markets Tax Credit Program to encourage investment in small businesses located in distressed communities ([HB 191](#)) to expanding consumer protections to require notification of security data breaches ([HB 62](#)) to expediting and increasing the efficiency of state road improvement projects through the awarding of additional design-build contracts ([SB 128](#)) — and were included in a group of more than 120 bills that are slated to become law.

My proposals to bring about more financial and educational accountability to charter schools and to require school districts to have a policy on seclusion rooms and restraint methods were passed in the General Assembly's wide-ranging education bill ([SB 291](#)). I support charter schools and believe they play an important role in our state's educational system and the oversight and accountability measures I forwarded will help improve the quality of public education services provided by these schools. Seclusion rooms first came to my attention when I chaired the Blue Ribbon Panel on Autism. My measure seeks to require school districts have policies that ensure the protection of special education students and that school district personnel and volunteers are properly trained to care for these students.

I was very pleased this year with the outcome of a bill I advanced in the Senate — [HB 257](#) — which will allow Lincoln County to operate as a second class county before the inevitability of attaining first class status. I sponsored an identical bill in the Legislature the past couple of years and am pleased our sustained efforts to secure this measure for Lincoln County were finally successful. Accelerating into a first class designation would require a substantial increase in facilities, staff and services and would have a harmful impact on a rapidly growing county like Lincoln County.

The following is a list of other bills I sponsored, co-sponsored or handled in the Senate that will become law:

- [SB 126](#) — prohibits life insurance companies from denying or refusing life insurance to Missourians based upon their past or future lawful travel destinations.
- [SB 127](#) — designates the first week of March as “Math, Engineering, Technology and Science (METS) Week” (incorporated into [HB 506](#)).
- [SB 137](#) — creates a multistate nursing licensure compact for registered nurses and licensed practical/vocational nurses (included in [SB 296](#)).
- [SB 338](#) — provides better protections for rape victims and enacts new protections for crime victims, including offering victims of violent crimes the opportunity to obtain a photograph before an incarcerated individual is released.
- [SB 307](#) — co-sponsored bill that imposes a gross receipts tax on certain ambulance service providers.

- [HB 231](#) — requires group policies by a health carrier or plan to employers not covered by federal COBRA to provide the continuation coverage to a terminated employee in the same manner as the COBRA law.
- [HB 390](#) — prohibits public colleges and universities from awarding college financial aid to students who are unlawfully present in the United States.
- [HB 922](#) — requires school districts to adopt a policy on allergy prevention and response with priority given to addressing potentially deadly food-borne allergies.

I am very disappointed that my measure that would have created the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board within the Office of Administration to prevent fraud, waste, and abuse of the funds received from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 — which was included in [HB 544](#) — was vetoed. This measure was supposed to ensure accountability and transparency in the managing of these funds and, in my opinion, this veto will negatively impact the degree of scrutiny of these funds and the state's ability to adequately track them.

As the summer continues, I will be focused on researching legislation for next year and meeting with constituents. As always, if you have any 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.

###