



New Missouri Laws to Take Effect

JEFFERSON CITY — August 28th is the date that most of the bills passed during the 2009 legislative session officially became law. Of the more than 500 Senate bills introduced this year, 37 Senate bills were signed and 12 were vetoed. Ninety-two House bills were signed into law and 11 were vetoed (11 budget bills also contain line-item vetoes).

One of the major accomplishments of this year's General Assembly was passage of a major jobs bill that will provide Missouri businesses and corporations with a larger set of tools for creating jobs and putting Missourians back to work. [House Bill 191](#) includes, among other things, expansion of the state's Quality Jobs Act and my proposal to expand the New Markets Tax Credit Program to encourage investment in small businesses located in distressed communities in our state.

Missouri also continued its commitment to education this year by passing a progressive and wide-ranging education bill that addresses many areas. [Senate Bill 291](#) includes a number of measures that will benefit Missouri school districts, students and teachers and support our state's commitment to keeping education our number one priority. Some of the measures passed include: developing performance standards for teachers; creating a method of obtaining teacher certification for individuals to teach in the areas of banking or financial responsibility; expanding virtual classrooms; and creating a non-profit P-20 Council to create a more efficient education system for grades P (preschool) to 20 (post secondary) to adequately prepare Missouri students for entering the workforce. 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 are also included in the bill and are set to become law.

A new consumer protection law that I advanced to require notification of security data breaches ([House Bill 62](#)) was passed and builds upon consumer protections I successfully passed last year regarding security freezes. I was also instrumental this session in passing [House Bill 577](#), which creates the Missouri HealthNet Data Transparency Program. The program that will make it possible for anyone to be able to find what a provider charged for a health care service covered by the MO HealthNet (Medicaid) program with just a click of the mouse. By creating a database that makes the costs transparent, it will allow Missouri to move more quickly in identifying fraudulent providers and help us to ensure state funding goes to those in need. Missouri is the first state in the nation to pass a law such as this that brings transparency to the state- and federally-funded health insurance program.

I am pleased more than a dozen of my proposals succeeded this year and are included among the 125 new laws that will be enacted on or before Aug. 28.

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Here are some of the major bills that were passed in the General Assembly:

- **FEE OFFICES** — Competitive bidding will now be required for fee offices that issue driver's licenses. The legislation will also delay mandatory vehicle inspections for new cars. ([HBs 683 & 381](#))
- **FUNERALS** — Strengthens state's oversight of the prepaid funeral industry. ([SB 1](#))
- **PATERNITY** — Men will now be able to protest a paternity judgment up to two years after claims of fatherhood. ([SB 141](#))
- **TEXTING WHILE DRIVING** — Drivers 21 and younger will be prohibited from writing, reading or sending text messages while driving ([HB 62](#)).
- **UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION** — Expands unemployment benefits. ([HB 1075](#))
- **VETERANS TAX CUT** — Will exempt 15 percent of a veteran's military pension from state income taxes in 2010, with the exemption increasing each year until it reaches 100 percent in 2016. ([HB 82](#))

I am pleased with legislators worked together to pass a number of progressive measures to benefit Missouri citizens this year. I know health care, jobs, energy and education will remain legislative priorities again next year. In just a few weeks, the General Assembly convenes for its annual veto session on September 16 before the pre-filing of bills for the next legislative session begins in January.

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.

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