



State Senator

Robin Wright-Jones

District 5



Column For Week of: March 16, 2009

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Mid-Session Report for the 5th Senatorial District

The middle of March marks the General Assembly's annual spring recess. The session started in early January and since then, 57 Senate bills have been passed by the Senate and sent to the House for consideration. In return, more than 40 House bills have been sent to the Senate for its approval. Several of the measures sent over to the House include bills that I have signed on to sponsor or co-sponsor in the Missouri Senate

One of the measures I am sponsoring this session is [Senate Bill 179](#). My bill authorizes Governor Nixon 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. Around this time last year, state officials in Illinois and Missouri reached an agreement to build a new four-lane bridge a mile north of the Martin Luther King Bridge, with design accommodations for a companion bridge to be built sometime later. On the Missouri side, the project includes building a partial interchange with existing I-70 near Cass Avenue, and improvements at the I-55/64/70 Tri-Level Interchange are scheduled for the Illinois side.

Before work can begin on this project, the necessary land must be obtained — including the ground covered by Senate Bill 179. My legislation has been approved by the Senate and has moved on to the House for similar consideration. Bills earning passage in both chambers move to the governor's desk to be signed into law. Passage of this legislation will help give workers the crucial green light they need to begin construction on the new Mississippi River Bridge project.

[Senate Bill 104](#), one of the bills I am co-sponsoring in the Senate, has also moved on to the House of Representatives. The measure would give young women in our state certain protections against the human papilloma virus, or HPV. This virus causes most cases of cervical cancer. The bill would also provide female students enrolling in the sixth grade at public schools the opportunity to be immunized for HPV. A parent or guardian would opt for the student to then receive the immunization. Senate Bill 104 also requires our state's [Department of Health and Senior Services](#) to mail relevant

information regarding the connection between HPV and cervical cancer, including the risk factors for HPV.

Another measure I am co-sponsoring in the Senate and that has now moved on to the House is [Senate Bill 140](#). The bill allows non-violent defendants in criminal non-support cases to receive education, vocational training and/or substance abuse treatment. Successful completion of these court-ordered programs may reduce or dismiss the charges or penalties against the defendant. Senate Bill 140 also lowers the non-support penalty from a felony to a misdemeanor if the amount owed is less than the total of 12 monthly payments. Far too often there are cases where Missouri parents are financially unable to pay child support. Senate Bill 140 provides these parents with more options for improving their life situation and providing financial support for their children.

Other important pieces of legislation are also making their way through the General Assembly, with one important measure already have been delivered to the governor's desk to become law. [Senate Bill 313](#) creates two accounting funds within the state treasury — the Federal Budget Stabilization Fund and the Federal Stimulus Fund. These two funds will receive and retain money provided under the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#). This legislation will help lawmakers and government officials track the more than \$4 billion our state is expected to receive from the \$787 billion federal stimulus bill signed into law last month.

I look forward to working for the citizens of the 5th Senatorial District in what will be a busy second half of the legislative session — when my colleagues and I will be working to pass balanced budget for the citizens of our state. To find out more information about the bills mentioned in this column or other matters involving state government, please feel free to contact my office at (573) 751-2606.

*Senator Robin Wright-Jones represents a portion of
St. Louis City in the Missouri Senate.*



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