



State Senator

Rita Heard Days

District 14



Column For Week of: April 27, 2009

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## Working to Establish Alzheimer's State Plan Task Force

*Task Force Would Address Nation's  
6<sup>th</sup> Leading Cause of Death*

Alzheimer's is a progressive and fatal brain disease. According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#), approximately 5.3 million citizens in the United States are living with this devastating disease. Alzheimer's attacks and destroys brain cells, resulting in problems with memory, thinking, and behavior that is severe enough to affect a person's every-day routine — from going to work, continuing life-long hobbies, and even having a social life. Sadly, this is a degenerative disease, which grows worse over time and ends with the ultimate diagnosis — death.

Alzheimer's has no current cure and has numerous effects to the patient and their loved ones. Alzheimer's and its related symptoms, including dementia, triple health care costs for Americans age 65 and older. The direct and indirect costs of Alzheimer's and its related symptoms costs Medicare, Medicaid, and other related businesses more than \$148 billion each year.

Treatment for its symptoms, in tandem with the right services and support, can help those diagnosed with this disease continue to carry on with their day-to-day activities. The General Assembly has recognized the continuing need to study this disease. [House Bill 272](#), a bill I recently handled in the Senate, would establish in the [Department of Health and Senior Services](#) an Alzheimer's State Plan Task Force.

This 18-member task force would assess the current and future impact of Alzheimer's disease and related symptoms on Missourians; examine the existing services and resources for those diagnosed with dementia, their families, and caregivers; and develop recommendations to respond to the escalating public health situation regarding Alzheimer's disease.

The task force would submit a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly and the governor in the form of a state Alzheimer's plan no later than Nov. 15, 2010. The bill has been passed by the Senate and is back in the House for final approval. We have made great strides in moving this measure through the Legislature, and I am hopeful that this bill will reach the governor's desk for his signature to become law.

With the creation of this task force, Missouri would join a world-wide effort to find new and better ways to treat this disease that affects so many. For more information about the warning signs and stages of this disease and the progress in Alzheimer's research, please visit the Alzheimer's Association website at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org).

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The Senate produces a weekly general column covering Senate action throughout the legislative session. If you would like to read more on important measures my colleagues and I are working on in the General Assembly for the citizens of our state, visit [www.senate.mo.gov](http://www.senate.mo.gov) and then click on Senate Newsroom. You can even subscribe to receive this great legislative resource, which is updated each week.

If you have comments or questions about any other matter involving state government, please feel free to contact my office at (573) 751-4106.

*Senator Rita Heard Days represents a portion of  
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