



MISSOURI SENATE  
JEFFERSON CITY

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## **Sen. Eric Schmitt Begins Work to Empower Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities**

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JEFFERSON CITY – Following up on his promise to help children with disabilities and empower their parents, Senator Eric Schmitt, R-Glendale, recently filed two pieces of legislation meant to empower the parents and family members of those with developmental disabilities.

[Senate Bill 157](#) codifies the five regional autism projects (Central, East, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest Missouri) that collectively provide Autism Spectrum Disorder services to approximately 2,500 families statewide. The regional projects are run by the Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities. The legislation specifies that each project would have a regional parent advisory council and that the division would establish the Missouri Parent Advisory Committee on Autism. Parent advisory councils would include seven to nine individuals who have family members with autism, including young children, school-age children, and adults.

"As the parent of a child diagnosed on the autism spectrum, I know how hard it can be for parents who are facing similar issues," Sen. Schmitt said. "I want to make sure that parents and family members have a voice in how the resources in their area are spent."

[Senate Bill 175](#) works to empower parents of children with disabilities by making sure they have access to important information regarding their children's education. This legislation would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to provide "The Parents' Bill of Rights," to inform parents of children in an individualized education program (IEP) of their educational rights. Each school district would then provide a copy of "The Parents' Bill of Rights" at least 10 days prior to the IEP meeting.

"Some parents are unaware of the rights they have to make sure their child receives an individualized education that suits their child's specific needs," said Sen. Schmitt. "This legislation will ensure that parents know what they can ask for at their IEP meeting to maximize their child's learning experience and development."

Both bills have been introduced on the floor, and will now be referred to a Senate committee where public testimony is heard and the legislation is discussed.

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Senator Eric Schmitt