

Senator Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



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Legislation Moving Forward At Mid-Session

It is hard to believe that we are already at the mid-point of the 2009 legislative session. As I have mentioned before, I filed several pieces of legislation designed to follow through with my promises to advocate for children with disabilities, work on meaningful health care reform, keep the assessment process fair and accountable, and grow our economy with quality jobs. This week, several of those bills continued their progress through the legislative process, and I want to give you an update on these measures.

I filed [Senate Bill 175](#) to help the parents of children with disabilities. Some parents are unaware of the educational rights they have as it relates to their child's individualized education program (IEP). Senate Bill 175 received a majority vote in the Senate Education Committee, and would require the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to produce "The Parents' Bill of Rights," to inform parents of children with an IEP of their educational rights. Each school district would then provide a copy of "The Parents' Bill of Rights" prior to an IEP meeting. Now that the legislation has been passed out of committee, it can be debated on the Senate floor.

Another bill I sponsored is meant to raise awareness for a condition that affects one in every 100 Missourians. [Senate Bill 366](#) would designate February 14th each year as Epilepsy Awareness Day. The day would be used to promote issues important to those dealing with epilepsy and would call attention to the treatment and the curing of epilepsy through research and education. We specifically chose Valentine's Day because St. Valentine is the patron

saint of those with epilepsy. This bill recently received a hearing in the Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics Committee.

I also sponsored [Senate Concurrent Resolution 23](#), a resolution to address fairness in property tax assessments that I discussed in the Senate Rules Committee this week. Property tax transparency and accountability is an ongoing issue throughout Missouri, but especially in St. Louis County. Just this week, the issue was again in the news as some local officials called for fairer assessments that reflect fair market values in the declining housing market. The resolution calls on all assessors in Missouri and the State Tax Commission to accurately reflect present market conditions, especially in relation to the dramatic increase in the rate of foreclosures and significant decreases in home values.

[Senate Bill 549](#) was voted out of the Senate Committee on Health, Mental Health, Seniors, and Families unanimously this week. The legislation would create an internet database of MoHealthNet (our state's Medicaid program) disbursements. The database would protect the privacy of MoHealthNet recipients' information and it would provide much needed transparency to track claims and payments making it easier to spot instances of fraud. In order to reduce state-sponsored health care costs, we must weed out waste, fraud and abuse in the system, as well as work to make the system more transparent. This sort of watchdog measure will help Missouri save real dollars on health care costs.

We will return to the Capitol on May 23rd, and the work of passing meaningful legislation to help Missourians will continue. If you have not yet had the opportunity to make the trip to the Capitol, please feel free to do so during the second half of session. Here are some of the groups that made the trip this week: 7th graders from Rockwood South Middle School advocating for STAR (Services for Teens at Risk); several groups from throughout the district for Pro-Life Action Day, including a large group from St. Paul Parish in Fenton; Alzheimer Awareness Advocates; a group from Federation of Republican Women; Rachel Mentz, Holly Wagner, and Prem Yesudian, with their teacher Louis Jacobs from Valley Park Elementary for Arts in Education Week; Jack Shea from St. Gerard Majella School in Kirkwood also for Arts in Education Week; the Kirkwood High School Dance Department; a class from Steger and the Computer School; and 4th graders from Robinson Elementary School in the Kirkwood School District.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the information below. If you would like to begin receiving this column regularly, click on the subscribe link on the bottom of the page.

Thank you,

Senator Eric Schmitt

Contact Information

Capitol Office

State Capitol Building
Room 334
Jefferson City, MO
65101

Website:

<http://www.senate.mo.gov/schmitt>

Phone Number:

573.751.2853

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