

# Senator Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



Week of April 13, 2009

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## Education: A Top Funding Priority

The first week of May marks Teacher Appreciation Week—a time for everyone to show their gratitude for a current or former teacher. This is especially important to me because my wife, Jaime, has taught in our local public schools. The truth is that educators are the backbone of any school. They are the ones teaching our children the lessons that will benefit them throughout their lives. Education is an important part of our work here in Jefferson City, and I want to share with you some of the ways we are helping Missouri's students and teachers.

This week, the full Senate worked on the 13 bills that make up the state's budget. One of our top priorities in the appropriations process is funding our K-12 schools. The budget contains a \$63 million increase for schools through the state's Foundation Formula, the formula used to fund public schools in our state. The elementary and secondary education section of the budget also includes a \$24.8 million increase for reimbursement costs to school districts for early childhood special education services. A \$15.8 million increase will help school districts with increased transportation costs. In total, House Bill 2 (the elementary and secondary education budget bill) is currently \$5.4 billion. The budget will now go to conference committee, where members from both chambers will discuss the differences between the Senate and House versions of the budget. Some of

### Visitors to the Capitol



*Forrest Miller, Jr. (Crestwood) with Sen Schmitt, testifying before the Senate Gubernatorial Appointments Committee on his appointment to the Missouri Community Service Commission*



*St. Peters Elementary 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Class  
(Kirkwood)*

To see their photos and others who have visited the capitol, click [here](#).

these numbers could change during that process, but education will remain a top funding priority.

There are also several pieces of legislation working through the legislative process this year that would benefit our schools. Many of these are included in the comprehensive education package ([Senate Bill 291](#)) passed in the Senate and heard this week in a House committee. They include:

- A wide-ranging measure that allows schools to offer—and receive state funding for—virtual courses. It also allows the governor to establish the “P-20 Council,” which would work to create a more efficient and effective education system to better prepare students for entering the workforce.
- A provision that provides that all revenue collected from the repeal of the casino loss limits passed last November be deposited into the Classroom Trust fund and then be dispersed to schools through the fund, ensuring that the money voters intended for public schools to receive is properly distributed.
- A measure I originally sponsored creating a Parents’ Bill of Rights so that parents would be clear on their rights before meeting about their child’s IEP (individualized education program).

Our students deserve a quality education, and educators are the ones who provide that solid foundation. They deserve our gratitude, and I hope you will join me in giving our teachers the appreciation they deserve.



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