

# Senator Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



Week of July 6, 2009

More information  
from the Capitol



## Work Continues for Autism Legislation

This week, I was back in Jefferson City to attend the signing of the first bill I successfully passed in the Senate, [Senate Bill 157](#). The bill codifies into law the regional autism projects that provide Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) services to approximately 2,500 families statewide. Now that the bill has been signed by the governor, the new law goes into effect on August 28th.

The state's five regional autism projects (Central, East, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest Missouri) will be run by the Department of Mental Health's Division of Developmental Disabilities. The projects provide important services to local families, including assessment, advocacy training, therapy, and parent or caregiver training. In addition, the legislation specifies that each project will have a regional parent advisory council and that the division will establish the Missouri Parent Advisory Committee on Autism. Parent advisory councils include seven to nine individuals who have family members with autism, including young children, school-

### Pictures from the Signing of Senate Bill 157



*Sen. Schmitt speaking at the bill signing on Wednesday.*



Sen. Schmitt was joined by his family including his wife, Jaime, son, Stephen, daughter, Sophia, his sister, Christy Hillier, and his niece, Charlotte.



Sen. Schmitt with his 4-year-old son, Stephen.

age children, and adults.

For many families with loved ones affected by autism, the availability of services and resources is an issue that is front and center in their lives each and every day. It is important to me to make sure regional autism projects are protected under law so we can continue to empower families and give them a voice in how precious autism dollars are spent. I am pleased that the governor and my colleagues in the Legislature agreed.

Our work to ensure ASD services get to those who need them must continue. This past session, we worked on a bill sponsored by Senator Scott Rupp of Wentzville that would have required health carriers to provide coverage for the treatment and diagnosis of ASD for patients under 18. Of the top 10 most common neurological disorders, autism is the only one not covered by insurance. Families all over our state struggle every day to afford treatment and services for their loved one with autism, and it is unfortunate that our work on this bill was not completed. Next session, this will certainly be a top priority for me.

For audio and video of the bill signing, visit my [audio/video](#) page. There was also a recent column by Tony Messenger in the Post-Dispatch about the bill signing and our work for autism, which you can read [here](#).

Throughout the summer, I will update you periodically on important legislation as it is signed or goes into effect.

My office in Jefferson City is here to help you throughout the summer, and you can call toll-free at 866-288-2344.

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