



Senator Luann Ridgeway – Serving Clay County

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Capitol Report
March 13, 2009
Senator Luann Ridgeway

Good news can come like a breath of fresh air and I'm pleased to report to you that Missouri has received good news for our children and education.

Last year, I sponsored legislation that was designed to solve Missouri's growing teacher shortages, particularly in the critical areas of science and math. The bill became law last summer. We now have good data showing that the legislation is having a positive impact for Missouri.

The law creates an alternative means to obtain certification to teach in secondary schools (grades 6 through 12). It is targeted at career-changing professionals. In other words, it is meant to provide a means for those already successfully working in various fields to gain teaching certification while still maintaining their current job and household income.

The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) is a non-profit organization founded in 2001 by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. They are dedicated to recruiting, preparing, certifying and supporting dedicated professionals to improve student achievement through quality teaching. With passage of my legislation, Missouri gave official recognition to ABCTE certification in August, 2008.

The program has had amazing success in only a short period of time. For example:

- * There have been over 800 enrollments in the ABCTE certification program by residents of Missouri
- * Of the 21 ABCTE certifications earned by residents of Missouri to date, 13

are in the high-need areas of math and science.

- * Over 850 people attended the January 2009 ABCTE information sessions in St. Louis, Springfield and Kansas City.

The average age of persons completing the ABCTE teacher certification program in Missouri is 38. Of those, 39% are male.

The candidates come from many different professional fields, including education, business and management, engineering and technology, health care, government and military and several other career fields.

The breakdown of teaching fields with candidates participating in ABCTE certification is as follows:

- * Mathematics 25%
- * Science 26%
- * History 17%
- * English Language Arts 29%
- * Other 3%

By no means does the ABCTE program do away with the traditional means of gaining teaching certification. Traditional certification is still required for teaching K through 5th grade. There is also another form of alternative teaching certification that has been available for years in Missouri. The ABCTE certification is not meant to replace either certification process that is currently available. It is merely another option targeting career changing adults to help solve a growing teacher shortage.

Due to funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the ABCTE program can be completed at a lower cost than other programs. Eligible candidates are able to keep their current job while studying at home according to their own schedule. The program requires rigorous testing to ensure that the prospective teacher is not only knowledgeable regarding subject matter, but also regarding teaching techniques.

Missouri schools will now have access to a new pool of qualified teachers via the ABCTE process. This is good news for our schools and our children's education.

From March 16 through March 20, the Missouri House and Senate will not be in session and closed for legislative spring break. I always appreciate your calls and e-mail responses, but please be aware that my staff and I will be away from the office next week. We will be able to respond to your calls and comments after session resumes on Monday, March 23. I hope everyone has an enjoyable St. Patrick's Day!

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