



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Wes Shoemyer
18th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 434
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

**A Weekly Column for the
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**Capitol Office
(573) 751-7852**

The Spirit of Bipartisanship

JEFFERSON CITY – At the beginning of each legislative session, the President Pro Tem of the Missouri Senate delivers remarks to his colleagues. These speeches typically call on the members to work together in a bipartisan fashion to get the people's business done in the five months we're in session. That spirit of bipartisanship usually prevails for a few weeks until some controversial issue pops up that divides the chamber, and the effort to cooperate with each other begins to fall apart. Hopefully this year will be different.

Part of the reason for my optimism is the fact the voters of this state overwhelmingly called for a new direction in the November election. The House and Senate will have to work closely with Governor-Elect Nixon this year in order to make this legislative session successful. The new President Pro Tem said as much in his opening day remarks and repeated that theme when talking to reporters at the close of the first day's business. In fact, the leaders of both chambers have met with the new governor several times already, and everyone has pledged to work together on the important issues facing Missouri this year.

First and foremost is getting our economy moving again. We start the New Year with a \$340-million budget shortfall. More than 200,000 Missourians are currently unemployed, and more than 700,000 Missourians lack access to affordable health care. I was glad to hear the President Pro Tem of the Senate acknowledge these facts in his opening day address, and I believe if we truly work together this year, we can make a difference in the lives of the people who sent us to Jefferson City to represent them.

I know the last few months have been tough for a lot of folks in northeast Missouri as jobs disappeared and retirement nest eggs shrank. The last thing people want to hear is that the politicians in our state Capitol are spending all of their time fighting with each other. For my part, I promise to do everything I can to keep this spirit of cooperation going for the entire legislative session.

We will have disagreements from time to time – that’s only natural in a legislative body with 197 members from all walks of life. But I think we can disagree without being disagreeable, and I hope that when the session wraps up May 15th, we’ll be able to look back and say we did our best to make Missouri a better place to live, work and play.

I want to congratulate the Shelby County R-IV School District and Marion County for securing grants through the state’s Safe Routes to School Program. In Shelby County, \$118,452 will be used to build a circular lane for school buses, a canopy to protect the kids in bad weather, and fencing at the Shelbina Elementary School. In Marion County, \$86,816 in grant money will be used to build a sidewalk from the Marion County R-II School on Route D to the Community Center in Philadelphia, making sure kids have a safe way to walk to school.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.