



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Hi Ho Monsanto

JEFFERSON CITY – We’ve worked some very long hours in the General Assembly this week without accomplishing a whole lot, but that’s just the nature of the legislative process. Twice this week we worked well past midnight and in both cases the bills we were debating were shelved without taking a vote. One of the bills we spent about 11 hours debating is the big economic development bill that the House passed back in February. Five times the Senate has tried to pass this bill, and five times opponents talked the thing to death. I think part of the problem is the jobs bill has been combined with an effort to reform the state tax credit system, which is a worthy goal in itself but one that should be considered separately. We need to pass a jobs bill to get people working again and to get our economy moving again.

Since we spent so much time talking about tax credits, I tried to amend the bill to reduce the tax credits Monsanto can get from the state. My amendment would reduce the amount of research and development tax credits Monsanto could receive from the state to one million dollars instead of over three million. This company, which is to earn an estimated \$9.75-billion in gross profits this year, should not be asking Missouri taxpayers to cover the cost of their research and development projects. Worse yet, Monsanto is threatening to move its planned expansion to another state if we don’t hand over the money

We need to be providing incentives to companies that create good-paying jobs in Missouri instead of offering millions of dollars in tax credits to a company that files lawsuits against its own farmers, co-ops and companies. This is just another case of corporate welfare run amok.

The Missouri Accountability Portal shows Monsanto received six million dollars from the state for research and development in 2000, and that amount dropped to \$250,000 in 2005. State lawmakers eliminated tax credits for research expenses for the development of agricultural biotechnology and plant genome products in 2005.

Farmers in South America pay less than half of what farmers in the United States pay for the same seed from companies like Monsanto. There is no competition in the seed industry because of the anti-competitive tactics of Monsanto, and as a result, we end up paying a lot more for our seed than farmers in other countries. I don't think we should reward that behavior by giving this big corporation millions in tax credits.

The state has weaned Monsanto off of state tax credits during my time in the General Assembly, and I do not want to see those tax credits revived. It's ridiculous to provide an AIG-type bailout to a company that rakes in billions of dollars in profits each year, and it's clear that the big jobs bill the Republican-led legislature wants to pass has been changed to benefit this one company.

I am one of many farmers whose life has been changed by Monsanto, and the patents it has acquired have disallowed economic development in rural Missouri. If we want to develop rural Missouri, we need to keep our wealth in Missouri. I'm tired of exporting all of our wealth, which is one of the reasons our kids are leaving farming and leaving rural Missouri.

The bottom line is my constituents need to know that there is still someone left who is willing to stand up and give companies like this a poke in the eye. They tried to intimidate me when I ran for office, sending investigators out to my farm. My Dad told me we had done nothing wrong and shouldn't back down. Well, I'm not backing down now either. I promised my constituents I would never back down and I would always stand up for the family farmer, and I keep my word.

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.