



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Next Generation Jobs

JEFFERSON CITY – One of the biggest challenges elected officials face in the current economic downturn is trying to find ways to put people back to work. During the legislative session that concluded in May, lawmakers approved House Bill 191 – the omnibus economic development bill – that will help create jobs by increasing the cap on the Quality Jobs Program from \$60-\$80-million annually. These tax incentives are provided to companies wishing to locate or expand in Missouri. In return, they must promise to create or add jobs that pay well and offer health benefits. HB 191 also increases the cap on the New Markets Tax Credit Program, which is vital to getting our manufacturing plants going again. This week I want to tell you about a new program launched by the Missouri Division of Workforce Development this summer that is helping to train Missouri's 21st century workforce.

Established as part of Governor Nixon's *Transform Missouri* initiative, the Next Generation Jobs Team offers young people in Missouri an opportunity to spend the summer months learning new skills, and possibly discovering new careers, in the fields of green energy, technology, health care, life sciences, business operations, construction and many other areas of interest. This free program helps those 16-24 years of age get a summer job where they can earn some extra money while they learn a new skill. The program can also match applicants with an internship to give them real-world experience in the field of their choice.

This program, which is funded in part by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, has been so successful that all but a handful of Missouri counties have stopped taking applications. All of the counties in northeast Missouri's 18th Senate District have received more applications than they can fill. The Division of Workforce Development had projected

226 young people from northeast Missouri would apply to the program as it was being developed. Before the application process was closed, 367 young people from our region had enrolled in the program and 259 of them are now working at summer jobs or internships. In fact, northeast Missouri is the only region of the state in which actual enrollment exceeded projected enrollment. While I am pleased that so many of our young people showed some initiative and applied for jobs this summer, I also think the large demand reflects the economic difficulties our largely rural region faces in these tough times.

I am hopeful that some of the measures we passed during the legislative session will help attract new businesses or encourage others to expand. The capital projects the legislature funded this year, some with federal stimulus dollars, will immediately put people to work.

Unfortunately, declining state tax revenues forced the governor to suspend funding for a number of important capital projects, including Pershing Hall at Truman State University in Kirksville. The governor also vetoed several spending items, including the Greenley Learning and Discovery Park in Novelty. These projects were originally going to be funded from the sale of assets held by the Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (MOHELA), but the agency failed to make the required payments to the state, placing many projects in jeopardy. I had urged the governor to use some of the federal stimulus dollars to get these projects moving again, and he initially agreed to do so. However, the governor says tax revenues have declined significantly since projections were made in January, forcing him to veto some spending approved by the legislature and suspend funding for other projects until the economy improves. I will continue to fight for these projects to make sure they are first in line when the money becomes available.

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.