

State Senator Kurt U. Schaefer - District 19

## Weekly Capitol Review

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# Legislative Highlights from the Missouri Senate – Week of Feb. 23, 2009

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Dear friends:

Thursday, Feb. 26 was the last day lawmakers were permitted to introduce new bills in the Missouri Senate. The cut-off date is necessary to keep the amount of legislation at a reasonable level before the end of session in mid-May. Even then, many bills fail to see the light of day for several reasons; some get delayed in committee, some are placed too far down the list to be make it to the committee process; others simply never make it to the floor before the end of session. Many of these bills may wind up as amendments placed on other bills as the end of session draws near. The scramble to place a piece of legislation into the mix often ends in a logjam with some bills so loaded with amendments that timely passage becomes impossible.

I introduced several bills Thursday, one being [Senate Bill 539](#), which creates the Energy Futures Fund. This bill provides authority to the Department of Natural Resources to distribute federal economic stimulus funds and seek federal grants for energy-related activities.

Another bill, [Senate Bill 540](#), authorizes the governor to convey the state property known as the Mid-Missouri Mental Health Center to the University of Missouri-Columbia.

There is still much legislation being considered by committee or presented in hearings before the public while the General Assembly continues to work towards completion of the 2009 legislative session.

[Senate Bill 390](#), which I am co-sponsoring with Sen. David Pearce, proposes equalizing scholarship amounts for public two-year and four-year institutions so that public school students are eligible to receive the same amounts as those attending private schools. It is important that we level the playing field for all students, regardless of their choice of private or public educational opportunities.

[Senate Bill 73](#), legislation sponsored by Sen. Bill Stouffer, would require participants and prospective participants of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program to

submit to a drug screen if the caseworker has a reasonable suspicion that controlled substances are being illegally used. In the event an applicant or participant fails the screen, he or she becomes ineligible for benefits for three years; however, their children would continue to receive aid. Currently, a great many people must satisfactorily pass a drug screen before — and after — being hired for a position; this bill places that same responsibility on those applying for or receiving state aid benefits. This policy would help ensure that your tax dollars are spent wisely.

In addition, I was appointed last week to the Missouri Senate Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee. The board will be responsible for studying how elementary, secondary, and higher education systems prepare students to be productive and successful citizens in Missouri. Our students represent our future, and we must ensure that each student is provided an opportunity to succeed in order to better the lives of future Missourians.

On a lighter note, Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> was also Pancake Day at the Capitol. This is sponsored by the Missouri Department of Tourism, and provides a pancake, sausage and juice breakfast for anyone who shows up. Legislators take turns flipping pancakes on the griddle, and then flipping them into the plates of hungry onlookers. I cautiously took my turn at the griddle, and am happy to report that my first experience with the Pancake Breakfast turned out with very few of my creations winding up on the floor. The event is always enjoyable, and helps promote tourism in our beautiful state.

These are just a few of the issues the state Senate is working on to better the lives of Missourians. For a more detailed report of all Missouri legislation, visit [www.Senate.mo.gov](http://www.Senate.mo.gov).

I will continue to keep you updated on bills being introduced that may be of interest to you as well as upcoming events here at the Capitol. As always, feel free to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns about the Missouri Legislature.

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