



The Stouffer Report: *The Legislative Session Comes to an End*


We have finished one of the more challenging legislative sessions in recent memory. This year, we were presented with a challenge in the form of a struggling economy, followed by federal stimulus dollars with a lot of strings attached. We in the Legislature worked hard to meet these challenges, create a balanced budget and send it to the governor on time.

Quite possibly the biggest bill passed this year was the jobs bill ([House Bill 191](#)). This bill expands the [Quality Jobs Act](#) and sets new limits on many tax credit programs including those dealing with Historic Preservation. This legislation was in response to the downturn in the national economy.

[Senate Bill 291](#), the omnibus education bill, also went to the governor for his signature. This legislation included changing the compulsory attendance to age 17 or 16 credits toward graduation, it allows 11th and 12th graders to earn credit while working certain jobs and establishes a committee to study the idea of "open enrollment." The bill also allows districts the option for a four day school week. The final bill did not include expansion of the [A+ Schools](#) program nor a tax exemption for fuel for school buses. Both were important ideas. Home schooling laws were also not effected.

A bill I sponsored to reform transportation laws passed as [House Bill 683](#). This will allow car dealerships to handle licensing and sales taxes, instead of having to drive to the nearest license office. It allows motorcycle or bicycle riders to make a left turn on a red light under certain circumstances, also known as "dead red." The bill relaxes rules for folks driving farm vehicles with a commercial driver's license (CDL).

A provision not included in my bill was the repeal of the state's motorcycle helmet law, which also passed this year ([Senate Bill 202](#)).

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I also had the pleasure of handling [House Bill 395](#) in the Senate. The measure makes some changes to laws governing long-term care facilities, including improvements to inspections of such facilities.

Another successful bill was [Senate Bill 1](#), which makes changes to rules on pre-need funeral contracts. This reform was prompted by a Missouri company that lost thousands of dollars after folks had bought pre-need contracts. Now, funeral services providers have to follow more guidelines that ensure something like this does not happen again.

We also had a victory with [University of Missouri Extension](#) funding. While the governor started the year by requesting a \$14 million, or 50 percent cut, all of their money was restored and the Extension will receive the same amount of funding as they did last year.

Other bills were not as successful. The construction work in progress (CWIP) bill — Ameren U.E.'s attempt to build a second nuclear plant in Missouri, a resolution to amend the [Missouri Non-partisan Courts Plan](#), a health care bill to expand welfare, a bill ending the coercion of abortions, changes to [Access Missouri](#) scholarships, an attempt to protect secret ballots even in the workplace, a resolution implementing the "fair tax," and a bill that would have let students carry concealed guns on college campuses were unsuccessful this year.

I often worried this session that the Legislature was not passing enough legislation, and then realized many Missourians feel we already have enough laws. We were successful in addressing improving folks' take-home pay and not raising taxes while providing the same state services. These are pressing issues throughout our state.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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