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The Stouffer Report: *The Importance of Agriculture in Missouri*

Missouri's farmers are hurting. But the days of agriculture being tossed aside may be coming to an end.

Last year, we were able to pass a [comprehensive agricultural bill](#) in the Legislature that the governor went onto sign. This year, there were some good attempts at doing more for rural Missouri. But, we are being told this should change next year.

There were dozens of moves to improve the quality of life for rural Missouri farmers, but none of them made it to final votes in the Senate or House. Fortunately, there are some provisions contained in this year's omnibus crime bill ([House Bill 62](#)) that benefit farmers and ranchers. Part of the new law includes points addressing vicious dogs and dog attacks. We have had some folks who have come close to being killed by pit bulls and other vicious animals who were not on leashes. The new law cracks down on the owners of these dogs.

House Bill 62 also specifies that anyone who steals a gun, livestock or certain animals will be guilty of a class C felony. If the person is convicted, he or she will have to serve at least 80 percent of the sentence before being eligible for parole. Cattle rustling has been growing in rural Missouri over the past few years. While some folks may laugh at this and wonder what century this is, this is a very serious crime. The [Highway Patrol](#) and the [Attorney General's](#) office have taken notice of this as well.

So, we were able to make a few strides. Plus, we in the

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-  Recent Topics
-  Local News
-  Visit the Capitol
-  My Legislation
-  About Me
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Legislature were given a promise that we could spend more time on agriculture issues next year. One of the ideas being floated is rural health care. Hospitals are few and far between in the small towns that dot the Show-Me State. There are few medical school students who want to set up practice in smaller towns, when they can do much better in large cities. This is something we are working to address.



There is a group of Missouri senators who have joined forces to work on what would be in an omnibus agriculture bill. The goal is to have a bill put together and ready to file on December 1, 2009, the first day pre-filed bills receive their number for the following legislative session. So far, CAFOs (concentrated animal feeding operations), requirements for licensed grain dealers and generally increasing funding for agricultural services and programs could be included in a bill.

Pushing more legislation is not always the answer, but in this case, it is needed in order to preserve the interests of rural Missouri. My hope is we can remind everybody in the General Assembly of the importance of the family farm and its impact not just throughout the state, but the country as well.

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.

bstouffer@senate.mo.gov | www.senate.mo.gov/stouffer
State Capitol, Room 332, Jefferson City, MO 65101 | (866) 768-3987