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The Stouffer Report: *Legislation Proposed for 2010*

With the first week of December comes the annual flurry of new legislation in the state's capitol. By state law, legislators on the state level can start filing bills for the 2010 legislative session on December 1 of each year.

While many folks struggle to grasp the difference in issues and jurisdictions covered by state and federal government, including legislators, it is important to note when the legislative branch of government here in Missouri is actually doing official business.

Each year, thousands of folks from the district — including several school groups — visit our office. They are usually surprised that the Legislature is only in session from January to May each year, outside of a potential special session and a session to consider the governor's vetoes.

I often tell folks it may not be a bad thing that the Legislature has so little time in session. Some state Legislatures only meet once every other year. Usually, the fewer new laws created, the better. In addition, it is important for folks to realize that lawmakers should be working real jobs and paying taxes back home just like other Missourians.

The legislation I have filed or will co-sponsor in 2010 includes the following measures:

- Opting-out of federal healthcare reform as written. This is in an attempt to refuse to implement federal plans that fail to meet the states' medical needs, sustain providers and honor taxpayers. Estimates show the federal proposal currently before Congress will cost the state an estimated \$200 to \$225 million.
- Establishing a tax credit program for residential care facilities taking care of the developmentally disabled.



This is similar to a law I wrote for facilities taking care of the state's children. It allows the state to pay these facilities in tax credits instead of direct monetary payments. The facility, in return, can use the tax credits to leverage more private dollars from potential donors.

- Continuing to propose drug testing for adult recipients of Medicaid suspected of drug abuse. If found guilty, funds would then shift to a designated caretaker for dependent children. This ensures those receiving help from the state are helping themselves with positive lifestyle choices.
- Restoring daily rehabilitation services for Medicaid recipients that suffer from traumatic brain injuries (TBI's) similar to those suffered by our troops returning home from war. This allows folks to return to functioning citizens and saves costs to the state. This proposal also reforms the [Missouri Head Injury Council](#) to better meet the needs of this population.
- Exempting sales tax on items sold in farmers' markets and for the production of game birds. This preserves our farmers' markets as a place for simple, free and fair commerce and also maintains sales tax exemptions for agriculture use.

Instead of offering a long list of proposals I have tried to identify issues that are fiscally responsible. If you have any suggestions for legislation, or comments, please let me know. Hearing from you allows me to do my job to the best of my abilities.

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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