

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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## Progressive Education Bill Clears the Senate

The Missouri Senate passed a comprehensive education bill — [Senate Bill 291](#) — on April 2 that included several of my own education proposals, including a measure that would change the school funding formula so that money derived from the passage of Proposition A last November by Missouri voters will go to students in Missouri classrooms as intended.

The proposed change in the school funding formula is a major component of the bill and is necessary to fix an error in the proposition language. Under the proposed funding change, the additional money generated by the removal of loss limits for state casinos would be distributed more effectively and efficiently to school districts through the existing Classroom Trust Fund. My proposal would also allow for the removal of the current 5 percent growth cap on school funding and would add a funding component for gifted students.

I'm very pleased with the education bill. It started out as a smaller education bill to pay for and expand virtual classrooms for use by Missouri school district students — which remained intact in the bill — and expanded into a larger omnibus education bill when several amendments were incorporated from proposals in other bills. In the end, many progressive measures to benefit Missouri students and our state's elementary and secondary education system made in into the bill, including:

- Developing performance standards for teachers;
- Regulating the use of school seclusion rooms;
- Adding new procedures and requirements and more accountability measures for charter schools;
- Establishing a parents' bill of rights for parents of children with an individualized education program and a similar foster care education bill of rights that would designate a staff person to be an educational liaison for foster care children;

- Creating a method of obtaining teacher certification from the state board of education for individuals to teach in the areas of banking or financial responsibility;
- Establishing the Missouri Preschool Plus Grant Program — a pilot program that would provide preschool services to students in school districts that are classified as unaccredited;
- Creating a non-profit P-20 Council to create a more efficient education system for grades P (preschool) to 20 (post secondary) to adequately prepare Missouri students for entering the workforce; and
- Implementing a pilot program that would allow St. Louis teachers to opt out of their tenure track to vie for higher performance-based salaries.

A measure I introduced regarding open enrollment was referred to a legislative committee, which will make recommendations by next year. The option of allowing school districts to adopt a four-day school week was voted down by a majority of senators. The House did recently pass a bill ([House Bill 242](#)) that would allow school districts the option of going to a four-day school week.

My [Senate Bill 558](#), which would implement the Missouri Promise Program — a state scholarship program — was recently approved by the Senate Education Committee and is expected to head to the Senate floor for debate soon. As you may recall, the bill would increase the number of students eligible for scholarships to the state's public community colleges, vocational and technical schools by expanding the program beyond the schools in the A+ Schools program to all public school districts in Missouri. It would also provide funding to extend those scholarships so students can go on to their junior and senior years at a Missouri public four-year college or university.

The Senate gave first-round approval recently to a health-care insurance plan for uninsured, low-income Missourians, and passed out of committee [Senate Bill 228](#) — a bill I mentioned in an earlier column that would allow AmerenUE to build a second nuclear plant by repealing a 1976 law that prohibits utilities from charging the cost of building a new power plant to consumers until it starts to generate electricity. The proposed energy bill has stirred a lot of debate and controversy around the state and should receive a lot of attention when it is debated on the Senate floor. I'll keep you posted.

Easter is nearly here, and I want to wish all of my constituents in the 25<sup>th</sup> District a blessed and Happy Easter holiday.

As always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can

reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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