

State Senator Robert Mayer

The Mayer Memo

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



[Website](#) | [Contact Me](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#)

Legislation Benefits State's Senior Citizens

The General Assembly passed several measures this year to benefit our state's senior citizen population, ranging from improvements to long-term care facilities, to providing an income tax exemption for certain retirement benefits, to establishing an Alzheimer's State Plan Task Force.

A major bill to pass during this legislative session was [House Bill 395](#), dealing with long-term care facilities. The legislation includes a Senate-sponsored proposal to increase the personal needs allowance for residents in long-term care facilities. As you may know, the personal needs allowance is a small portion of an individual's monthly Social Security check that is given to the individual for personal needs not provided by the long-term care facility. This legislation creates a means for the allowance to increase incrementally over time, beginning in 2010, from its current \$30 per month to a maximum of \$50 per month. This increased allowance is important because it gives residents more independence and a greater sense over their finances.

House Bill 395 also contains a number of other important measures. They include:

- Improving fire safety standards for long-term care facilities;
- Allowing a facility to do a background check on residents;
- Prohibiting long-term care inspectors from having worked at such facilities over the past two years to avoid a potential conflict of interest;
- Extending the healthcare provider tax, allowing the state to continue to draw down federal dollars, which have a significant impact on the state's budget for health care.
- Increasing the one-time nursing home transition grant amount to MO HealthNet participants with disabilities transitioning from nursing homes back into the community from \$1,500 to \$2,400 — subject to appropriations.

The General Assembly also passed [House Bill 272](#), which establishes the Alzheimer's State Plan Task Force within the Department of Health and Senior Services to assess the impact of Alzheimer's disease and related dementia on residents of this state.

It is estimated that 5.3 million citizens in the United States are living with Alzheimer's, the progressive and ultimately fatal brain disease, and that by 2010, over 100,000 will be diagnosed with Alzheimer's in Missouri. The General Assembly recognized the continuing need to study this disease and help advance strategies for further-mitigating — and someday even stopping — the ravages of Alzheimer's by establishing this state task force.

Another piece of legislation on target to become law is [House Bill 82](#), which authorizes an income tax exemption for military retirement benefits and removes the age requirements for the Social Security income tax exemption. One hundred percent of the military retirement benefits will be exempt by 2016 under the bill's proposals.

As baby boomers age, seniors will account for an increasing portion of Missouri's population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates, seniors comprised 13.4 percent of Missourians in 2007, an uptick from 13.3 percent in 2006. As a proportion of the population, seniors are anticipated to increase to nearly 15.1 percent by 2015 and more than 19.1 percent by 2025.

The issues and concerns of our older citizens are a high priority for Missouri lawmakers, and

I am pleased the Legislature was successful in passing these measures to support our senior citizens.

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.

###

Capitol Office			Website:			Phone Number:		
State Capitol Building			http://www.senate.mo.gov/mayer			877.291-5584		
Room 422						Fax:		
Jefferson City, MO 65101						573.526.1384		