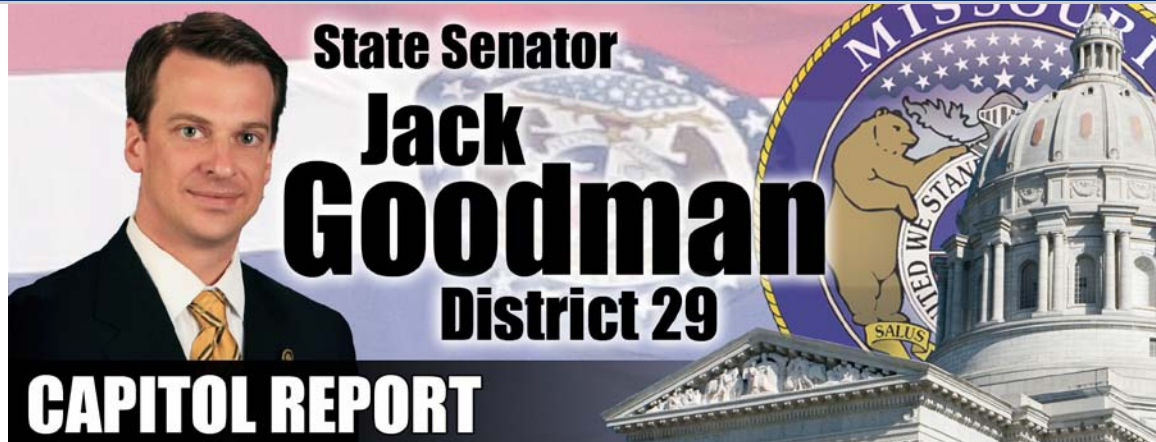


Week of August 17, 2009



Senator Jack Goodman – Serving Barry, Lawrence, McDonald, Ozark, Stone and Taney Counties

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As a new school year rapidly approaches and Missouri families shift our focus from summer break to back-to-school preparations, it seems timely to address some of the education reforms Missouri lawmakers accomplished this session. Every year, lawmakers debate measures designed to equip our students to thrive in a rapidly changing world. As lawmakers, we have the responsibility to ensure the quality of public education through appropriate funding and through legislation addressing new concerns and obstacles.

Unfortunately, even though most lawmakers share the goal of providing a high-caliber education for the children of Missouri, we often disagree about how to achieve that goal. Consequently, education bills often get caught up in rhetoric and controversy, to the detriment of our young people. This year, after nearly a decade without any large education reforms, we were finally able to pass a comprehensive bill — [Senate Bill 291](#).

I was pleased that SB 291 included provisions to expand the use of virtual classrooms in Missouri schools and provide funding for school districts and charter schools to create new virtual school programs, building on the state's current [virtual school](#). In 2006, I sponsored and passed SB 912, which established Missouri's Virtual School. This important legislation enabled students to access daily lesson plans via the internet that teach the same concepts being learned by other public school students in that grade level. The bill also allowed gifted students to take advanced courses not offered in their districts. Additionally, those homebound for medical reasons could utilize the virtual school to receive an uninterrupted education. I am excited that the virtual school's success has been recognized with expansion and additional resources.

Some of the other key provisions of SB 291 provide as follows:

- All new revenue resulting from the gaming measure passed by the voters last

November shall be placed in the Classroom Trust Fund and distributed to schools on a per-pupil basis.

- Each public school will develop standards for teaching by June 30, 2010. The teaching standards will center on students' success in the learning process and the teacher's knowledge of the content, level of preparation, ability to manage students, and the teacher's degree of professionalism.
- Local school districts have the option to establish a four-day school week. The option would require the vote of a majority of the local school board members.
- The P-20 Council, a private, not-for-profit entity on behalf of the state, is created to develop a more efficient and effective education system to better prepare students for entering the workforce.
- The Missouri Senior Cadets Program is created to provide opportunities for 12th graders in public schools to mentor kindergarten through eighth grade students.
- The School Flex Program is created to allow eligible students to work part-time and still pursue a timely graduation from high school.
- The Persistence to Graduation Fund is created with an established procedure for school districts to apply for grants to implement drop-out prevention strategies.
- "The Parents' Bill of Rights" is created to inform parents of children with an individualized education program of their educational rights under law.
- Students in elementary schools shall participate in moderate physical activity (beginning 2010-2011) for an average of 150 minutes per week or 30 minutes per day.
- Districts hammered by inclement weather will only be required to make up a total of 10 school days.

This year's bill is just one step in the ongoing effort to strengthen the educational opportunities available to Missouri children. We must never become lax in our search for new and innovative ways to equip today's young people to become tomorrow's leaders. I look forward to discussions on how we can improve our schools even more in the coming year.

As always, I welcome your ideas, questions and concerns about Missouri government. You may contact me at the Capitol as follows: (573) 751-2234, jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov or by writing to Senator Jack Goodman, Missouri State Capitol, Room 331-A, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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