

Week of May 18, 2009



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[2009 Legislative Session a Success](#)

As of last week, my first session as your state senator has come to end. Though it was a challenging time because of the economic situation in Missouri and nationwide, we passed several pieces of significant legislation that will make a positive impact on the lives of all Missourians.

One of the most important bills to be sent to the governor's desk was [House Bill 191](#), an economic development measure that contained language similar to a bill I sponsored ([SB 45](#)). This was probably the most revisited and heatedly debated issues of the session. Though it took patience and compromise, a bill that the majority of us could stand behind, designed to spur economic growth, create jobs and reform tax credits, was passed in the final hours of the legislative session and will soon be signed into law.

Bringing excellent, high-paying jobs to Missouri and getting Missourians back to work was a primary focus when developing HB 191. To do this, we expanded on the already successful Quality Jobs program by increasing the cap on the amount allowed for the program from \$60 to \$80 million. Quality Jobs provides tax incentives to businesses that create jobs paying above county average wages, and that pay for at least half their employees' health care benefits. Another part of the bill will help small businesses thrive by removing any user fees they must pay to the state in order to receive a small business license for the next four years. Also, any rules developed by a state agency must not adversely affect small businesses with less than 25 employees. Small businesses are the cornerstone of our economy, and we need to give them the opportunity to grow without excessive regulations and fees.

While tax credits can be extremely helpful in job creation and economic growth, it is

important to know exactly how they are working. HB 191 modifies the tax credit reporting process by requiring tax credit recipients to report job creation resulting from the use of tax credits. Also, to increase transparency and accountability, tax credit information must be made available to the public on the Department of Economic Development's website and through the [Missouri Accountability Portal](#).

As a freshman senator, I was very fortunate to see several of my bills pass this year. While I credit the issues for speaking for themselves, I am thankful that my colleagues also recognized the importance of getting these bills through the legislative process. One of these bills is [Senate Bill 542](#), legislation that reinvests \$1 billion in Missouri communities, helps create and retain jobs, and comes at no expense to taxpayers. I worked with State Treasurer Clint Zweifel to develop this bill, which was supported by community banks and credit unions, to expand the already-existing Missouri Linked Deposit Program. Because only 30 percent of the money set aside for the discounted loans under the program is in use, SB 542 changes the law to increase eligibility for the program and streamline the application process.

Another of my passed bills is [Senate Bill 44](#), which addresses safety concerns posed by the lack of regulations at privately owned jails in Missouri by requiring these facilities to meet the same standards as public jails. I was compelled to sponsor this legislation after two inmates escaped from a private jail in Johnson County last year and their escape went unreported for several hours because the jail was not required to notify law enforcement. This incident seriously compromised the safety of local communities, highlighting the need for the law to be changed. In addition to requiring private jails to immediately notify law enforcement if a prisoner has escaped, SB 44 creates the crime of escaping from a private jail.

Two military measures I handled in the Senate also made it to the governor's desk. The first, [House Bill 427](#), relates to active military members and veterans, and among other things, adds four legislators (two from each party and each chamber) to the Missouri Veterans' Commission and allows the dependents of active military members stationed in Missouri to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. The second, [House Bill 82](#), creates a state income tax exemption for any military retirement income. It begins with a 15 percent exemption on a veteran's military pension in 2010 and gradually increases until it becomes a 100 percent exemption in 2016.

Just because the General Assembly is no longer in session and I'm no longer making weekly trips to Jefferson City, does not mean my work as your state senator is done for the year. Now that I am back home, the work truly begins as I have more opportunities to talk with many of you. In the coming months, I look forward to working in the district to address your concerns and hear your suggestions so we can have another successful session next year.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senate District.

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