

Week of July 20, 2009



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Bills Signed Into Law

Now that the deadline has passed for the governor to sign or veto the bills that were sent to him this year, we know which bills will become law and which may come up for discussion during the Legislature's annual veto session in mid-September. Every bill the governor vetoes is sent back to the sponsoring chamber with his objections, and if lawmakers decide to try to override a veto, the motion will be put to a vote. To overturn a governor's veto, a two-thirds majority vote in both chambers is required.

Most the bills signed by the governor take effect on August 28, the default effective date for legislation. However, some took effect immediately upon receiving the governor's signature and others will take effect at another specified date. Several of the bills I sponsored or handled received the governor's signature and will become law—including the private jails bill (SB 44) I discussed last week.

Two military measures I handled in the Senate were also signed into law and will take effect August 28. Both of these bills will have a positive impact on the lives of Missouri's active and retired military members and their families, and are a small gesture of appreciation for the sacrifices they have made on behalf of this country. [House Bill 427](#), which had overwhelming bipartisan support in both chambers, addresses issues important to both active military members and veterans, including making Missouri an even more military-friendly place for those who are stationed here. One especially significant provision will allow the dependents of active military members stationed in Missouri to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities, regardless if the military member is re-assigned outside the state. This will help ease the financial burden for military families struggling to save and pay for college.

Another part of the bill adds four lawmakers to the Missouri Veterans Commission—two members from the Senate and two members from the House of Representatives. In

each chamber, one member would be chosen by majority leadership and one by minority leadership to ensure bipartisan representation on the commission. This change will help improve the effectiveness of the commission and ensure that veterans' interests are represented in the Legislature.

House Bill 427 also establishes an interstate interchange designation program to honor fallen Missouri heroes who have been killed in action while on active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq on or after September 11, 2001; allows veterans displaying Congressional Medal of Honor, Prisoner of War, Purple Heart or Silver Star special licenses plates, or Bronze Star placards to park for free in metered parking spaces upon the approval of the local governing entity; and requires all court orders to be temporary regarding child custody or visitation while an individual is in active military service and deployed out-of-state.

The other military-related bill signed by the governor, [House Bill 82](#), creates a state income tax exemption for any military retirement income, without requiring a veteran to reach age 62. 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. Because Missouri didn't previously offer this exemption, many veterans have been lured to states that did exempt military benefits, such as Kansas and Illinois. By giving Missouri veterans a complete state income tax exemption on their retirement benefits, it is my hope we can encourage them to live out their retirement years here.

Two other bills I handled in the Senate were also signed into law. [House Bill 883](#) expands the Missouri Linked Deposit Program by increasing eligibility and streamlining the application process. It will also help maximize returns on the state's investments by changing the interest rate the state collects on deposits in community banks. [House Bill 299](#) removes the annual \$10 million appropriation limit on funding for the Missouri Arts Council. The council provides grants to public libraries, public broadcasting entities and local arts councils across the state. Both bills will be enacted into law August 28.

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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