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## A Time to Give Thanks

Nearly 400 years ago, in November 1620, after a long and perilous journey across the Atlantic, the pilgrims arrived aboard the Mayflower in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. However, finding Cape Cod an unsuitable location for farming, a few weeks later they sailed to nearby Plymouth, where they decided to settle.

The European colonists were not prepared for the harsh conditions. Of the 102 pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, only half survived by the spring of 1621. Even though they had just been through a brutal winter, none of the remaining colonists returned on the Mayflower back to England. In what was a remarkable act of faith in the face of tremendous odds, they resolved to make this new land their home. That was also the spring they met the Wampanoag Indians, who befriended the pilgrims and taught them how to live off the land and survive the winter.

In the fall, they shared a feast celebrating their successful harvest, which is generally acknowledged as the first Thanksgiving celebration. This celebration wasn't repeated, however, and the pilgrims did not call it a day of thanksgiving. To them, a day of thanksgiving was considered a religious holiday when they would spend the day in worship and thank God for a specific event—this wasn't to occur until 1623, when a day of fasting and prayer was called during a period of drought. When it began to rain during the prayers, it was declared a day of thanksgiving. Gradually, it became a custom to celebrate a day of thanksgiving after each harvest.

Thanksgiving conjures up thoughts of heaping plates of delicious food, family and friends gathered around a table in fellowship and bountiful harvests. As we celebrate the

holiday next week and reflect on what we are thankful for in this past year, I want to thank you, the residents of the 31<sup>st</sup> Senatorial District. I am thankful that you have allowed me the privilege of being able to serve in the Legislature and be your voice in the Missouri Senate. Public service is a duty I take very seriously, and I know that I am in the Capitol because you have graciously entrusted me with the important responsibility of representing you. My first year as your senator has been an invaluable experience to me, and as we approach the 2010 legislative session, I know we will continue working to better the lives of Missourians in the 31<sup>st</sup> District and all across this great state.

The turbulent economy has caused some tough times for Missouri, but I am confident we will soon regain our foothold, and with the help of our Midwestern values of hard-work and perseverance, come back stronger than ever. And despite how grim circumstances may seem, we still have so much to be thankful for—especially that we live in a country where our ideas cannot only be heard, but also realized.

As you celebrate Thanksgiving with your loved ones, I wish you a holiday season full of renewed hope, thankfulness, love and laughter. Have a safe and blessed holiday.

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 31<sup>st</sup> State Senatorial District.*

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