

Week of November 30, 2009



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## Preparations Begin for 2010 Legislative Session

The Missouri General Assembly will convene for its 2010 legislative session in Jefferson City in just a few short weeks. For lawmakers, one of the most basic, yet crucial parts of the legislative process is the pre-filing of bills for consideration. Because conventional wisdom holds that bills assigned a lower number have a higher likelihood of passing given our time constraints (session runs January through mid-May every year), the process of pre-filing bills is very important.

Each year, Missouri Senate rules allow pre-filed bills (lawmakers can pre-file bills beginning July 1) to receive a number on Dec. 1. It is customary that each member of the Senate, beginning with the most senior member, picks his or her top three priority bills, which are then each assigned a number. Lawmakers may pre-file bills continuing up to, but not including, the first day of session, and any bills filed during this pre-introduction period are automatically introduced and read for the first time on the opening day of session. Though pre-filing ensures that a lawmaker's top priorities will receive a lower number than if they were filed after session begins, bills may also be introduced by any senator during the session, up to a specific deadline.

Preparing for a legislative session involves more than pre-filing bills. Most lawmakers serve on committees that are busy preparing recommendations for legislative action in the upcoming year. I've recently been appointed by Senate Leader Charlie Shields to serve as chairman of the Senate Education Committee, which is responsible for matters relating to early childhood learning, elementary and secondary schools, higher education, job training, community colleges and technical schools, and developing an educated workforce in Missouri. I am confident that my work as chairman of the Senate 2020 Educated Citizenry Committee and vice-chairman of the Senate Education Committee has well-

prepared me to take on this important role, and I appreciate Sen. Shields entrusting me with this great responsibility. I know that if we embrace bold ideas and practical solutions we can make Missouri a leader in education.

Also this week, I was appointed by Sen. Shields to serve on the newly created Senate Select Committee on Redistricting. With the 2010 Decennial Census just around the corner, the forming of this committee is the Senate's first step to prepare to complete its constitutionally mandated task of Congressional redistricting following the census. Congressional redistricting is an incredibly important responsibility because the districts must be drawn equally and fairly to ensure that every vote counts. In Missouri, Congressional redistricting is the responsibility of the Legislature. This new committee is charged with performing all duties necessary for the General Assembly to prepare for its role in the 2010 Decennial Census, which includes drawing and approving new Congressional districts during the 2011 regular session to ensure proper filing in February 2012 for Congressional district candidates.

And finally, next week the Senate Appropriations Committee will conduct hearings at the State Capitol on Dec. 7 and 8. These annual hearings allow the public to give testimony and provide input regarding the state's upcoming budget year. We are all well-aware that this is going to be a very tough budget year as our state deals with less-than-projected revenues. As a member of the appropriations committee, I understand that creating a balanced fiscal year 2011 budget will force us to make some difficult decisions. I will talk more about the committee hearings and the upcoming budget year next week.

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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