



Thank you for the opportunity to serve Southeast Missouri as your state senator.

The 2010 legislative session ended on May 14th.

This year was particularly challenging due to a downturned economy. With every bill passed, we had to pay close attention to how we were spending your tax dollars.

Even with the budget complications, we still passed meaningful autism insurance reform, strengthened DWI laws in the state, and improved Missouri's "prompt pay" regulations.

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INSIDE:



**Strengthening
DWI Laws**
Page 2



**Help for
Autism**
Page 3



**Protecting
Farmers**
Page 3

Heroes Way: Honoring the Fallen

In May, we gathered to honor those in Southeast Missouri who have given the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedom. At this ceremony, Heroes Way Interstate Interchange signs were unveiled and dedicated for four local soldiers killed in action while serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Heroes Way Interstate Interchange Designation Program was created last year and allows interstate interchanges to be named for service members who were killed in action in Iraq and Afghanistan. As part of this tribute to our fallen soldiers, two memorial signs will be erected in the North/South or East/West directions of the designated interstate interchange in remembrance of their sacrifice.

The cost of the two designation signs is \$2,200, and organizers have started a nonprofit to raise money for other qualifying military members in the state who have made the ultimate sacrifice. To date, organizers and fundraisers have raised more than \$13,000 for Heroes Way statewide. For more information, contact my office at (573) 751-2459.



Fairness in Prompt Pay

As a result of discussions with healthcare providers across Southeast Missouri, the Department of Insurance began an investigation into the amount of time it took for insurance companies to provide reimbursement payments to healthcare providers. The investigation concluded that more than \$500 million in outstanding claims were owed to 69 hospitals in Missouri. And more than one-fourth of the claims by healthcare providers to insurance companies had been unpaid for at least 90 days.



This information led the General Assembly to pass HB 1498, known as “prompt pay.” This bill changes the laws regarding the payment of health insurance claims by setting up specific time frames for healthcare providers to submit claims and for insurance companies to pay them. In addition, the bill modifies the interest and penalties for withholding reimbursements to healthcare providers.

Reforming DWI Laws

This year, the Legislature worked to strengthen laws to hold repeat drunk drivers accountable. House Bill 1695 strengthens penalties for intoxication-related traffic offenses.

The bill specifies that no person who operated a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol level (BAC) of .15 or more will be granted a suspended sentence for a first offense, unless a person participates and successfully completes the requirements of a treatment program. A person who operated a motor vehicle with a BAC between .15 and .20 will be imprisoned for at least 48 hours, and a person who operated a motor vehicle with a BAC of .20 or more will be imprisoned for at least five days.

The bill also changes the minimum imprisonment from five days to 10 days for a prior offender and from 10 days to 30 days for a persistent offender to be eligible for parole or probation—unless, as a condition, the person performs a certain amount of community service or participates in a court-ordered treatment program.





Help for Families with Autism

The passage of autism insurance reform this year is the culmination of a journey to alleviate some of the challenges Missouri families and individuals living with autism deal with.

Prior to 2005, Missouri's budget did not include any specific funding to support autism programs. Since 2006 to the current budget year, we have invested more than \$30 million on specialized autism services for Missouri families.

In 2007, we passed legislation that included \$2.6 million for the construction of the Southeast Missouri Autism Center. Today, it is up and running, and with an annual appropriation of \$494,000 in operating funds, the center is providing much-needed treatment and diagnosis services to Southeast Missouri families. Also starting in 2006, the state budget has included an annual \$200,000 for the Tailor Institute, an organization working to provide career opportunities for those who have been diagnosed with autism on the higher end of

the spectrum in Southeast Missouri.

In 2009, the Legislature created the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders to advise the governor, General Assembly, and state agencies on matters concerning autism spectrum disorders. Two Southeast Missouri autism advocates, Dr. David Crowe, the founder of the Tailor Institute in Cape Girardeau, and Connie Herbert, the director of the Southeast Missouri State University Autism Center for Diagnosis and Treatment serve on the commission.

And this year, with the passage of HB 1311, children on the autism spectrum will now be guaranteed coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of autism. The bill specifically provides for applied behavior analysis, one of the more widely used and effective treatments for autism. Also, insurance companies can no longer refuse to issue or renew coverage because of an autism diagnosis.

Blocking Tax Increases on Farmers

A responsible government operates with the core principle that the money you work hard to earn is yours; not the government's. The government will never spend someone else's money as carefully as you spend your own, and to take it away from you to eventually mismanage and give to another is wrong.

As economist Milton Friedman said, "The real danger we face is that government spending will creep up and up and up. The only effective way I think to hold it down, is to hold down the amount of income the government has. The way to do that is to cut taxes."

This is why the General Assembly made it a priority to pass Senate Concurrent Resolution 35 in order to prevent the Missouri State Tax Commission from increasing taxes on farmers. In December, the Commission voted to raise taxes by as much as 29 percent on the most productive farms in Missouri by approving new "productive values" for agricultural land. But the resolution blocked the tax increase.



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Welcome to the Capitol



▲ *Keith Seabaugh, a WWII veteran from Jackson, met with Jason to talk about issues important to veterans.*

Members of the Chaffee student government visited on March 18 to learn about state government. ►



Brittany Holmes of Marble Hill visited the Capitol to ask Legislators for improvements to the unsafe conditions of Highways 34 and 51. ▼



◀ *Representatives from Bollinger County observed the inner workings of our state government as part of the Sophomore Pilgrimage to teach responsible citizenship.*



Keep up-to-date on events at the Capitol by subscribing to Jason's weekly reports. Visit www.senate.mo.gov/crowell and click the "Sign Up to Receive My Newsletter" link.