



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of January 25, 2010**

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Protecting Our Seniors & Our Heritage

JEFFERSON CITY – In the early ‘70s, Missouri lawmakers approved legislation to provide some tax relief to our senior citizens and people who are 100 percent disabled. The Missouri Property Tax Credit program, or “circuit breaker,” has been a huge benefit to older Missourians and disabled citizens, many of whom live on fixed incomes.

This property tax relief program is targeted to the people who need it the most – our parents, our grandparents and disabled Missourians. These folks have relied on this program for years to help make ends meet. That money will be spent in our local communities, so it’s a win-win for everyone.

However, the Missouri Department of Revenue recently determined that people who rent their homes from tax-exempt entities no longer qualify for the tax relief program, despite the fact renters have been receiving this benefit for decades. In response, I filed legislation this week to ensure that those who have been eligible for the circuit breaker program continue to be eligible.

The circuit breaker program has always provided property tax relief to qualified renters and people who own their homes part of the year. Those 65 years of age or older who are single with a household income of \$27,500 or less and married couples with a total household income of \$29,500 or less qualify for the program, as do citizens with a 100 percent disability. Those who own their homes qualify for the tax credit program if they are single and have a household income of \$30,000 or less, or married with a total household income of \$34,000 or less.

The Senate this week approved a Senate Concurrent Resolution I co-sponsored rejecting a proposed tax increase on our most productive farmland. We should not be increasing taxes

on farmers when they are struggling with weather challenges, higher costs for things like fertilizer and seed, and volatile markets. I appreciate the bi-partisan support for the resolution and thank my colleague Senator Bill Stouffer for sponsoring the resolution.

This week we also convened a meeting of the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus, a group of lawmakers dedicated to preserving and promoting our hunting and fishing heritage as well as our Second Amendment rights. I am the Senate Chairman of the Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus. The only way to preserve our hunting and fishing heritage is to get young people involved in these activities, much as our fathers and grandfathers did with us when we were young. For a lot of young folks in rural Missouri, the first hunting trip or first fishing trip is a rite of passage that teaches responsibility and an appreciation of our incredible natural resources. There's really no experience that matches the excitement a young hunter feels after shooting his first turkey or a young fisherman feels after catching his first bluegill, except maybe the pride a parent feels in sharing that heritage with his child.

The Sportsmen's Caucus will feature courses on hunter education and conceal and carry this year, and we will sponsor a youth turkey hunt and a trapshooting event. By the way, the Missouri Department of Conservation offers an online hunter education course; just visit their website at <http://www.hunter-ed.com/mo/>.

We welcomed several visitors to our Capitol office this week, including Charles Holland, a business development specialist with University Extension, and Mary Short and her daughter Crystal Short, who own Danni Nicole's in Hannibal. The Shorts recently received an award from University Extension, which does a lot more than put on local fairs. University Extension promotes economic development and small business development and really is an asset for rural Missouri.

If you have any questions or comments about these or any other issues give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.