



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of February 22, 2010**

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The Census

JEFFERSON CITY – During the second week of March, Missourians will receive a notice in the mail informing them that the U.S. Census forms will be arriving soon. Census forms will begin hitting doorsteps the week after that, and I encourage everyone to take ten minutes to complete the 10-question census. By filling out your form and mailing it back (forms come with postage paid return envelopes) you will ensure there is an accurate and complete count of every person living in the United States.

This is important because an accurate count helps the federal government determine how to distribute the \$400 billion in funding that is allocated to states and cities across the country. The census information is used to determine how much money our communities will receive for our local schools, hospitals, roads and bridges, law enforcement grants and so much more. In fact, for every person not counted, we will lose an estimated \$1,300 per year in federal funding.

Congressional districts across the country are divided to represent roughly equal numbers of people. Each state is guaranteed at least one Representative. There is a slight possibility Missouri could lose a U.S. House seat based on this year's population count, which would cause congressional districts to be redrawn and could reduce the amount of federal money awarded to Missouri. However, there is a good chance Missouri will keep all nine House seats if everyone is counted during the 2010 Census.

I know some folks have concerns about how this information will be used, but there are strict rules in place to protect everyone's privacy. The information collected by the U.S. Census Bureau is kept private by Title 13 of the U.S. Code. Census employees are subjected to background checks and take an oath to prevent private information from being leaked.

Violation of Title 13 can lead to five years in prison or a \$250,000 fine. Census employees can be identified by their government-issued ID badges and usually have a tote bag with the 2010 Census logo.

The questions on the U.S. Census form you will receive next month include whether your house is rented or owned, your address, and the names, genders, ages and races of others living in the household. In fact, it requires less personal information than a typical credit card application. For example, the 2010 Census does not ask about bank account information, salary or income, citizenship or immigration status, and they never ask you for your Social Security number. Again, by law the Census Bureau cannot share your responses with anyone, including other federal agencies and law enforcement entities. If you need help completing the form, call the Telephone Questionnaire Assistance Center at 866-872-6868.

We had another busy week welcoming visitors to our Capitol office, including Andrew McCall, a student from Truman State University who was selected this year (one of 32 scholarships offered in the U.S.) to be a Rhodes Scholar and will study at the University of Oxford. I was pleased to present Andrew with a resolution and the Senate honored him for his achievements. We also met with representatives from the Parents As Teachers Program, members of the Northeast Missouri State Teachers Association, officials from the City of Kirksville, a variety of students from Truman State University, nurses from the district representing the Missouri Nurses Association, Russell Runge, the Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director for the City of Mexico, John Veatch of the Mudd-Veatch Funeral Home, Audrain County emergency medical specialists, Dr. Shane Hart, a chiropractor from Bowling Green visiting the Capitol with others from the Missouri State Chiropractor's Association, members of the Missouri Corn Growers Association, physical therapists from across the district, several Records of Deeds from the district, and Jalee Gooch, a junior from Van-Far High School who job shadowed me on Wednesday.

It was also neat to meet Daytona 500 winner and Joplin native Jamie McMurray, who was honored as a special guest in the Senate this week. Jamie won the Daytona 500 a couple of weeks ago, and I want to offer my congratulations to this rising NASCAR star.

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.