



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Plant Science & The President

JEFFERSON CITY – The state of Missouri took an important step this week toward becoming a leader in bioengineering with the groundbreaking ceremony in Mexico for the Missouri Plant Science Center. For the past three years I have worked with state officials, Governor Jay Nixon, U.S. Senator Kit Bond, Representative Steve Hobbs, and officials from the University of Missouri and the City of Mexico to secure funding for this cutting-edge facility in Audrain County. The 25,000 square foot center features wet and dry laboratories, manufacturing equipment and office space to promote the research and development of cleaner fuels, more nutritious foods and a greener environment by capitalizing on Missouri's \$2.5 billion soybean industry. Soy Labs LLC of California will be the Plant Science Center's first tenant, bringing 20 good-paying jobs to northeast Missouri, with more likely to follow. Soy Labs produces soy-based ingredients for the food and health industries.

Construction of this \$11 million facility will help create an agricultural biotechnology alley in Missouri, anchored by the Danforth Plant Science Center and Washington University in St. Louis and the Stowers Institute for Medical Research in Kansas City. By merging research and development with manufacturing, the Plant Science Center is poised to become a huge economic engine for northeast Missouri for years to come. In addition to the folks mentioned above, I also want to thank Eddie and Connie Sydenstricker of Mexico for donating the ten acre site for the center, and Governor Nixon for keeping state funds available for this innovative project.

On Wednesday I had the honor of joining President Obama in Macon for the Missouri leg of his "White House to Main Street Tour." The President talked about strengthening the

rural economy during his visit to Poet Biorefining in Macon, the first ethanol plant to open in Missouri. This ethanol plant is owned by more than 300 area farmers who are making fuel in the Midwest so we don't have to import as much fuel from the Mideast. Poet Biorefining has 45 employees and produces more than 46 million gallons of fuel each year. The ten-year old facility purchases 16 million bushels of corn each year from 650 area farmers. POET also plans to begin production of cellulosic ethanol from corn cobs, leaves and husks.

I was impressed by President Obama's goals for growing new businesses in rural areas, his commitment to strengthening the rural infrastructure and his support of agriculture in general. I also thought it was nice the president took some time out of his busy schedule to talk to several of the diners having lunch at Peggy Sue's Cafe in Monroe City.

On the Senate floor this week I offered an amendment to an omnibus transportation bill which would have allowed the MODOT credit unions to continue operating in MODOT buildings. Past and present employees of MODOT and the Missouri Highway Patrol, as well as their immediate families, have come to rely on the services provided by the MODOT credit unions for years. Unfortunately a majority of my colleagues did not support my amendment, so the future of these credit unions is now in doubt.

As usual, we welcomed a lot of visitors to our Capitol office this week, including members of the Freedom of the Road Riders, Christy Jones and her fifth grade class from Holliday, and students and teachers from the Holy Family School in Hannibal.

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 e-mail at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 W. Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.