



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of June 28, 2010**

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Special Session, Continued

JEFFERSON CITY – At this point in the Special Session called by Governor Nixon, a lot of things remain up in the air. The Senate met this week to debate a tax incentive package designed to convince the Ford Motor Company to keep its manufacturing plant in Claycomo, near Kansas City. Dozens of other Missouri companies manufacture supplies for the Claycomo plant, including Spartan Light Metal in Mexico. However, the chairman of the Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee refused to allow the committee to vote on the tax incentive bill. Republican leaders may replace the chairman in an effort to get the bill through committee, or they can try to convince him to change his mind.

The House version of the bill decoupled the Ford incentives from pension reform, which the governor linked together in his call for a special session. As I said in last week's column, I do not think we should ask the lowest paid state employees in the nation to make additional sacrifices in order to give tens of millions of dollars in tax breaks to a company that reported more than two billion dollars in profits in just the last quarter. The House carved out the tax incentives for Ford from the Quality Jobs program, which provides tax incentives to companies that create good-paying jobs with benefits. Although the Quality Jobs program offers up to \$80 million per year in tax incentives for job creation, less than half of that amount has been utilized. The House also added tax incentives for computer data centers, airplane manufacturers, elderly homeowners and others in its version of the bill, but a Senate committee stripped those extras out of its version of the bill.

The Senate did advance the pension reform bill this week. I voted against the bill in committee, just as I did on the floor of the Senate earlier this year. I have been getting a lot of

calls from state employees, teachers and others who are adamantly opposed to the pension reform bill. We should not ask our new state employees, who reportedly rank 50th in the nation in pay, to contribute four percent of their salaries toward their retirement. Despite the low pay, we've been able to attract quality employees to work for the state because we have offered decent retirement benefits. If we start cutting those retirement benefits, what incentive would anyone have to work in the public sector? These are the folks who staff our prisons, who maintain our roads and bridges, who staff our mental health facilities, who patrol our roads and waterways, who protect our parks, and who take care of all of the various functions of state government. They work hard and they deserve our support.

The U.S. Supreme Court handed down an important ruling this week reaffirming our Second Amendment rights by tossing out Chicago's blanket ban on handgun possession. The court recognized the fact that citizens have a right to defend themselves, but the justices left some wiggle room for states and cities that want to keep guns out of the hands of felons or the mentally ill or out of schools and government buildings.

My son and I enjoy hunting together – it is part of our family tradition and one that has led to a lot of the values I hold in serving in this office – those strong rural values that come from hunting and the right to own a gun. For me it's an important part of my heritage and something I want to be able to pass on to future generations.

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.