



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of September 27, 2010**

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Health Care News

JEFFERSON CITY – This week I had the pleasure of attending groundbreaking ceremonies for a major renovation at the Scotland County Memorial Hospital in Memphis. Funding for this important project was awarded through the USDA's Rural Development program and will greatly improve health care services in northeast Missouri. The project will be completed in five phases, beginning with the replacement of the hospital's old boiler system with two new energy efficient boilers. The second phase will be construction of a new out-patient surgery center; phase three will be construction of a new critical care nursing unit of 20 beds with new or renovated patient rooms; phase four will remodel the old surgery space into a consolidated radiology imaging suite; and the final phase will be construction of a hospital library that will operate in conjunction with the Scotland County Public Library. The project is expected to be completed by December of 2011.

There was another important item on the health care front this week. A new state law takes effect this week which gives the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services the authority to work with law enforcement agencies and pharmacies to track sales of pseudoephedrine, the cold medicine that's a main ingredient in the manufacture of methamphetamine. The new law creates a database linking our state's 1,300 pharmacies. It will allow pharmacists and law enforcement agents to track people who go from store to store buying large amounts of pseudoephedrine in an effort to evade legal limits. Pharmacists using the new database can now deny the sale to someone who already has bought the daily maximum amount of 120 cold tablets. The system also sends an alert to law enforcement agencies about the attempted illegal purchase.

Right now, cold products containing pseudoephedrine can only be sold at a pharmacy and must be kept behind a counter. Buyers have to show ID and sign a register, forcing law enforcement agents to comb through dozens of registers trying to find people making multiple purchases. Now, pharmacists can enter the person's name into the database and get instant information about how much pseudoephedrine that person has purchased already, as well as when and where those sales occurred. The new system can also detect fake ID cards and flag multiple buyers living at the same address.

Missouri law enforcement has been aggressively going after meth labs in Missouri and they are making a difference. Last year, authorities seized 1,774 meth labs in Missouri. As of June of this year, authorities have seized 943 meth labs. Despite the efforts of law enforcement and public health officials, we still lead the nation in meth lab seizures. I am hopeful this new pharmacy database will help reduce those numbers even further because methamphetamine is an extremely dangerous, addictive drug that has destroyed far too many lives in Missouri and across the country.

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.