



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of October 11, 2010**

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October Skies

JEFFERSON CITY – Summer has finally given way to Fall, as the days grow shorter and the nights grow cooler. The dry weather has been a blessing for our farmers, who've had ample opportunity to harvest their crops. It's been picture-perfect weather for Friday night football games, all of the fall festivals and craft shows, and for enjoying the fall colors in Missouri. In fact, state conservation officials say we're enjoying the peak fall colors in northeast Missouri right now. The maple trees are turning orange and red, tulip trees are rusty orange, ashes are starting to turn yellow, and the Mississippi hills and bluffs south of Hannibal along Highway 79 are dotted yellow, gold and orange. Peak color should last a few more days in our neck of the woods, so I hope you have a chance to get out and enjoy Mother Nature's annual display.

Corn farmers got some good news from the federal government this week as the Environmental Protection Agency agreed to allow more ethanol to be mixed with gasoline for new model cars. The EPA has approved a 15 percent ethanol mix, or E15, for cars manufactured since 2007. Since 1979, most cars and trucks have been able to use a 10 percent ethanol blend. This week's announcement is great news for corn producers and the investor-owned ethanol plants in our area. It's also great news for our environment because ethanol produces fewer greenhouse gas emissions when it's burned. For years I've said that we are much better off keeping jobs and dollars here by producing homegrown fuels rather than importing our fuel from the Mideast. This expansion is welcome news on many fronts.

October is also the month Missouri seniors aged 65 and older, people under 65 years of age with certain disabilities, and anyone with permanent kidney damage requiring dialysis or a

kidney transplant will be receiving notices from Medicare, Social Security, and health and drug plans with information about any policy changes for 2011. The official “open enrollment” period for Medicare begins November 15 and ends December 31. It’s important that our seniors and disabled citizens review their health care plans before the open enrollment period.

Medicare is a health insurance program that is divided into four parts: Part A is hospital insurance; Part B is medical insurance; Part C is Medicare Advantage plans like an HMO or PPO; and Part D is Medicare prescription drug coverage.

Most people are covered through original Medicare, which provides Part A and Part B coverage under a fee-for-service arrangement. Many have also chosen to join a Medicare Prescription Drug Plan to receive Part D coverage.

For more information about this year’s open enrollment period you can visit www.medicare.gov. You can also get help by calling 1-800-633-4227 (TTY users should call 1-877-486-2048).

It’s important to note that plan costs and coverage change each year, so everyone with Medicare should make sure their plan is still affordable and meets their health care needs.

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.