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The Stouffer Report: Session in Review: Veterans' Issues

The 2010 legislative session proved to be fairly successful in terms of helping folks in the military. I think it is fitting that the session ended during May, which is [Military Appreciation Month](#).

Among the bills that have been sent to the governor is [House Bill 1524](#), which is an omnibus veterans bill. Part of this measure creates the Missouri Youth Challenge Academy, under the [Missouri National Guard](#). This academy would provide residential, military-based training and supervised work experience to at-risk high school age youth. The act also creates the Missouri Youth Challenge Fund to support the academy, which would consist of gifts, donations and appropriations. This provision was also in a bill that I handled in the Missouri Senate, [House Bill 2262](#), which was passed by lawmakers this session as well. Both bills were signed into law by the governor on May 27.

Other aspects of House Bill 1524 recognize "prisoner of war" and "missing in action" designations as valid descriptions of casualty status and category classification for military personnel; define the "primary next of kin" in order of precedence — a surviving spouse, eldest child, father or mother, eldest brother or sister or eldest grandchild — for the purposes of the [Uniform Code of Military Justice](#); and allow for overseas voting for active military members.

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Another measure that I sponsored, but was not successful was [Senate Concurrent Resolution 45](#). This was written to tell [Congress](#) to continue to support the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. Federal lawmakers are threatening to do away with this policy, despite the fact it has worked very well. I have said many times that this is not the time to be changing a major policy. My hope is that the will of the American people will win out over the bureaucrats on Capitol Hill.

We worked really hard with the available resources and small amount of funding this year. I always try to do everything possible in the Missouri General Assembly to help our men and women in the U.S. military. I pray for all the folks who are currently in harm's way, their families and all of those who have given their lives to help keep this the greatest country to live, work and raise a family.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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