

Week of July 26, 2010



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## 2020 Educated Citizenry Committee Meets in Kansas City

Even though the special session just ended in Jefferson City, other important legislative work continues around the state.

This week the Senate Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee held a two-day meeting in Kansas City to discuss several issues related to the future of Missouri's educational system. I serve as chairman of the committee, which is charged with determining what education in Missouri should look like by the year 2020 and developing long-term strategies to achieve these future goals. Eventually, we will develop tactics for Missouri schools to consistently produce well-rounded individuals who are able to thrive in a competitive global market.

The Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee, along with the Job Creation 2020 Committee and Healthy Missourians 2020 Committee, were established by the Senate in early 2009 at the suggestion of Senate President Pro Tem Charlie Shields of St. Joseph. The committees have been meeting since then to develop forward-thinking, strategic plans for the state and to define where Missouri should be in the areas of job creation, health care and education in the year 2020.

President Shields felt we only focus on our policy and budget issues one year at a time. The 2020 committees are different from our regular legislative committees, because we have the time to look at the big picture and develop a roadmap for how to best achieve the goals we set for our state. We can shift our focus from the present to the future, which is a good thing because we must become proactive rather than reactive if we are to emerge as a leader in the next decade.

In the Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee, a thorough discussion of education will help us develop the best possible long-term plan for our state's schools. While we have

countless top-notch public schools in Missouri—at all levels—we still have a long way to go. In particular, we must focus on making higher education more accessible. The Show-Me State ranks in the bottom tier of states in the number of young adults with a degree past high school. If we want Missouri to prosper and grow, we must invest in higher education, as well as life-long learning and retraining to develop a highly skilled workforce.

During our meeting in Kansas City, legislators and staff met for a K–12 funding formula workshop to talk about how to best deal with the budget challenges that we will face in the next few years. We also listened to presentations by the Kansas City School District’s School Board President Airick West and Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Dr. Chris Nicastro. In addition, I facilitated a panel discussion on urban education with several education leaders from the Kansas City area.

The committee will continue to meet throughout the interim before we are asked to submit a final report to the Senate by the end of the year. I look forward to continuing our discussion of bold and innovative education solutions, and I’m confident that the Educated Citizenry 2020 Committee will present a collection of executable and effective ideas to the Senate for improving Missouri’s educational system. Hopefully, this will serve as a blueprint for educational decisions for years to come. Although we face some economic uncertainties, I am committed to continuing to make education a top budget priority next year. As a state, it’s one of the best investments we can make. For more information on the 2020 committees go to [www.senate.mo.gov/2020Committees](http://www.senate.mo.gov/2020Committees).

As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office with your questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

*Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31<sup>st</sup> State Senatorial District.*

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