

State Senator

District 8

Will Kraus



2016 LEGISLATIVE REPORT



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

It has been an honor to represent eastern Jackson County in the Missouri Senate in 2016. While crafting beneficial public policy by nature requires debate, disagreement and compromise, it is inspiring to work with my 31 Senate colleagues toward the goal of creating a better Missouri. The opinions of those I represent are extremely important to me, and I ask you all to contact my office with any concerns you may have.

One of my roles as your state senator is to help you navigate our state government. Unfortunately, state services can be bogged down with red tape, and citizens' concerns get lost in the bureaucratic shuffle. If you have a problem with a state department, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

I encourage all Missouri citizens to keep up with the work being done by the Legislature, as state laws often affect our everyday lives more than you might expect. If you are ever in our beautiful and historic state Capitol, please stop by the District 8 office and introduce yourself.

Sincerely,

Will Kraus

*State Senator
District 8*



WORKING FOR MISSOURI'S FUTURE

The 2016 legislative session ended May 13, with the General Assembly passing 143 measures. This session we focused on growing our economy, building stronger Missouri communities and families, and reforming governmental ethics laws. The governor has 30 days after receiving passed bills to take action, either signing them into law or vetoing them. If the governor takes no action on a bill, it becomes law without his signature at the end of the 30-day period.

The Legislature passed two bills modifying Missouri's tort laws, which will help protect businesses and job creators from frivolous lawsuits, thereby encouraging economic growth. **Senate Bill 591** aligns Missouri's outdated standards for admitting testimony by expert witnesses in civil cases with federal standards. **Senate Bill 847** allows awards in personal injury lawsuits to be based on the actual cost of medical services rendered instead of the estimated value. Both of these bills create a more attractive climate for businesses, bringing economic investments and jobs to our state.

The General Assembly also passed **House Joint Resolution 58**, disapproving the State Tax Commission's recommendation to raise property tax on agricultural land by 5 percent. Agriculture is Missouri's No. 1 industry, and it is important we help our farmers thrive, as they are the ones who provide affordable food for our grocery stores and dinner tables. I was proud to sponsor the Senate version of this resolution.

As the cost of health care continues to rise, the discussion about how to offer more efficient and more affordable care becomes increasingly imperative to improving our communities. **Senate Bill 579** will allow more doctors to practice medicine via telehealth services, increasing access to health care in Missouri's rural areas. **Senate Bill 875** allows pharmacists to fill a prescribed name brand with interchangeable generic medicines, helping lower the cost of medication for Missourians.

Senate Bill 814 would exempt income earned through active military duty from Missouri income tax, creating a better environment for military members. Current Missouri law allows military residents stationed out-of-state to deduct active duty income, but it does not allow residents stationed in-state to do so. This policy effectively subjects military residents serving in their home state of Missouri to lower take-home pay. Bills such as these are important in thanking those who have sacrificed and served in the military.

Missouri's statutes dealing with family law have tremendous emotional impact on citizens affected by them. **House Bill 1550** provides courts guidelines in child custody cases to split time more evenly between parents when both are willing and able to provide a healthy, stable environment for the child. **House Bill 1599** allows adult adoptees to obtain a copy of their original birth certificate. This important update to adoption law will help individuals obtain more information about their health and family history.

State lawmakers passed several ethics laws relating to government officials, including: **House Bill 1979**, prohibiting public officials from registering to lobby until six months after their terms have expired; **House Bill 1983**, prohibiting public officials from serving as paid political consultants; and **House Bill 2203**, requiring any person registering as a lobbyist to dissolve any campaign fund or committee.



LEGISLATION SPONSORED BY SEN. KRAUS

I proudly sponsored several Senate bills and handled a number of House bills this session aimed at making Missouri a better state. My main legislative priorities in the 2016 session included protecting the integrity of our election process, promoting economic growth and pushing back against government overreach into businesses' and taxpayers' pockets.

The General Assembly passed historic legislation letting Missourians decide if voter photo identification requirements should be allowed in the state. **House Joint Resolution 53**, which I handled as well as sponsored the corresponding Senate legislation, puts a constitutional amendment allowing the Legislature to pass a law requiring voters to have a photo ID to a statewide vote. The resolution passed both the House and the Senate and will appear on the November ballot. Passed by the Legislature, **House Bill 1631**, which I also carried, would implement the voter ID requirements if voters approve HJR 53. These pieces of legislation are vital to preventing voter fraud, which is currently extremely difficult to detect, and they are essential to preserving the integrity of our democratic process.

I also sponsored **Senate Bill 786**, allowing the secretary of state's office to investigate election offenses, write probable cause statements and be named as a special prosecutor on election offense cases. As Missouri's chief election officer, the secretary of state should have legal authority in conducting investigations of election offenses and the ability to help local prosecutors when they do not have the resources or expertise to prosecute these cases.

A main priority of mine every year I have served in the Legislature has been to reduce citizens' tax burdens and prevent government overreach into taxpayers' pockets. **Senate Bill 823** ensures that access to the Internet is never taxed.

A significant problem I have witnessed in my time as a legislator is overregulation by bureaucratic state departments. **Senate Bill 1025** corrects a reinterpretation of a sales tax law by the Department of Revenue that required gyms, dance studios and other fitness facilities to collect sales tax on instructional lessons. This law would restore these classes to their tax-exempt designation as educational.

Also brought to my attention this year was a Department of Health and Senior Services rule requiring hospitals to build fences around helicopter landing pads despite the added danger these fences pose to pilots. I sponsored **Senate Bill 899** to prohibit the department from requiring fences in order to let hospitals decide what is safest for their pilots and patients.

*These measures are currently awaiting action by the governor. To view the governor's latest actions, please visit:
<https://governor.mo.gov/news/legislative-actions>.*



Pictured above: Sen. Kraus gives constituents a tour of the Senate chamber during 2016's annual District Day.



Pictured above: Sen. Kraus teaches students from Sunny Pointe Elementary about the legislative process.

HOW TO STAY UP TO DATE

You can always reach the District 8 office by visiting Room 418, by dialing (573) 751-1464 or by emailing: will.kraus@senate.mo.gov.

Capitol Reports Please sign up for my email newsletter. During session, you will get updates about my legislation and the work being done by the entire General Assembly.

Throughout the summer and fall, I send newsletters aimed at educating readers about our governmental processes. You can sign up by sending an email to will.kraus@senate.mo.gov with the word 'newsletter' in the subject line or by visiting: www.senate.mo.gov/kraus and following the links to sign up.

Social Media Keep up with what is happening at the Missouri State Capitol by following me on Twitter! Look for my handle, @SenWillKraus.

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CREATING A BUDGET TO CURB GOVERNMENT GROWTH

One of the most important tasks for the Legislature is to pass an on-time and balanced budget that Missouri taxpayers can afford. Over the last few years, the Appropriations Committee has worked to make the budget more transparent so that it accurately reflects the amounts departments will need and use. We worked diligently this session on this year's \$27 billion budget to find ways to reduce costs while still funding the quality services that are critical to Missouri and our citizens.

The budget is initially developed and passed by the House of Representatives, before moving to the Senate Appropriations Committee. The Senate committee evaluates the spending of every state department. In most departments, costs are increasing at reasonable and sustainable rates. However, year after year, social services departments continue to see astronomical growth, increasing 26 percent this year alone. Together with the Department of Health and Senior Services, we worked to make Medicaid spending more efficient and curb the unsustainable growth in this portion of the state's budget.

Other highlights of the budget include a \$71 million increase to K-12 education and an \$18.5 million increase for all scholarship programs, including Bright Flight, Access Missouri and A+. The Senate also increased funding to the Show-Me ECHO program to \$3.4 million. The program is a cost-effective, knowledge-sharing network that helps lead to better health outcomes for patients and can fundamentally change people's lives. It expands access to best-practice specialty care to patients close to home, especially in rural communities.



*Revenue, Office of Administration, Elected Officials, General Assembly and Real Estate.