

STATE SENATOR

DOUG LIBLA



DISTRICT 25



2016
CAPITOL REPORT



*Senator Libla's staff (left to right):
Billy Pat Wright, Kyle Aubuchon and Ashley Bax*

NOTABLE EVENTS IN THE 25TH DISTRICT

- Echo Bluff State Park opened July 30. It is located in Shannon County, 15 miles north of Eminence on Highway 19. I strongly encourage you to visit and see the great lodge, modern campgrounds and restaurant overlooking Sinking Creek and its picturesque bluffs. Learn more at www.echobluffstatepark.com.
- Caruthersville School District received full accreditation from the State Board of Education. Congratulations to the students, parents, faculty, staff and community volunteers for their hard work and improved academic performance.
- Richland High School earned the 2016 National Blue Ribbon Award for high academic levels; it's one of only eight public schools in Missouri receiving the honor by the U.S. Department of Education.
- Highway 67 in Butler County from Route M to the Route 60/67 interchange was dedicated as the "SSgt. Eric W. Summers Memorial Highway," in honor of SSgt. Summers, who died in the line of duty on Nov. 13, 2013.
- Three Rivers College celebrated its 50th anniversary this year. Founded in 1966, the first enrollment was 138 students with classes held in downtown Poplar Bluff. Today, they serve over 3,500 students throughout Southeast Missouri.



Three Rivers College

IMPROVING MISSOURI'S BUSINESS CLIMATE

One of my biggest concerns is Missouri's unfair and outdated civil judicial system. The toxic legal climate has forced businesses and job creators out of our state. The current number of lawsuits in Missouri is alarming; frivolous lawsuits must stop. The following two common-sense bills were passed by the Legislature this session.

Senate Bill 591 modified provisions relating to expert witnesses. Missouri is one of only 10 states that has not adopted a standard similar to the Daubert Standard. This standard provides a rule of evidence regarding the admissibility of expert witnesses' testimony during legal proceedings. It ensures that only those individuals who are truly expert witnesses may provide testimony.

By changing our outdated expert witness testimony requirements, we will improve our business climate

and safeguard the reliability of testimony. This reasonable basic standard ensures juries are given the most reliable, factual evidence on which to base their decisions.

Senate Bill 847 provided that parties may introduce evidence of the actual cost, rather than the value, of medical care rendered. Juries don't always see the actual cost paid by plaintiffs, they only see "perceived value" and often grant "phantom damages."

These measures received approval from both the Missouri Senate and House, but were vetoed by the governor. Regrettably, there were not enough votes to override the veto. These bills would have helped to improve a poorly functioning legal system, and are extremely necessary for our state to move forward.



Senator Libla presents legislation to the Missouri Senate Financial & Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN HEALTH CARE

As the cost of health care continues to rise, the discussion about how to offer better, more efficient and affordable care becomes imperative. The cost of welfare spending now takes up one-third of our state's budget. Costs are reduced when best-practice care is provided in a timely and coordinated fashion. While the federal health care law is driving up costs and causing general chaos in health care, the Missouri Legislature is pushing the opposite approach. We know that transparency and personal responsibility in health care is needed to bring down costs, increase quality of care and cut down on overutilization and waste in the Medicaid system.

Currently, most patients don't know what they are actually paying for when they go to the hospital and don't find out until they get their bill. Health care transparency language in Senate Bill 608 will help patients make better decisions about the care they need and where they want to receive that care. Knowing the true cost of medical services encourages competition and allows the market to drive down costs.

We also know it costs more to treat patients in the emergency room and many Medicaid patients regularly overuse the ER. This is putting

a tremendous strain on our ERs and state budget. Instituting an \$8 co-pay to patients using the ER in a non-emergency is not unreasonable or a burden – it's responsible. A co-pay encourages Medicaid patients to see primary care doctors to be treated comprehensively and at a lower cost.

We need realistic solutions to the health care problems of our state. Medicaid may be free to recipients, but taxpayers are footing the bill and the cost is out of control; maintaining the status quo is not going to fix the problem. Accountability and transparency are part of the solution and that is what Senate Bill 608 does. Despite the governor's veto, the General Assembly was able to override his objections in making this legislation become law.



Jonathon Gordon with the Boys & Girls Club of Poplar Bluff is recognized as "Youth of the Year."

PROMOTING AND PROTECTING MISSOURI AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS

Every two years, the Missouri State Tax Commission releases a study reassessing agricultural land, based on average productivity and costs. This year, the commission proposed to increase taxes on soil grades 1-4, meaning many Missouri farmers would see a property tax increase of 5 percent, unless rejected by a vote of the Missouri Legislature. This proposed increase comes on the heels of a 5 percent hike by the Tax Commission just two years ago, which many of us in the Legislature opposed but were unable to block. This year, we were successful in preventing the tax increase from going into effect.



Welcoming the Missouri FFA Leadership Team.

Our farmers are struggling with high input cost with very low prices received for their crops, and this tax increase would negatively affect a farmer's bottom line. This comes at a time when it is harder for young people to buy a farm or get involved in agriculture. Currently, the average age of a Missouri farmer is 58 and climbing. It's a tough time in agriculture and dropping another tax increase on farmers only makes the situation worse. We need to get the government out of the way and make it easier for farmers to do what they do best: feed our country and produce Missouri's chief export.

State Senator Doug Libla

201 W Capitol Ave Rm 219
Jefferson City MO 65101

(573) 751-4843

www.senate.mo.gov/libla

2016

Capitol Report

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PROTECTING CONSUMERS FROM DEBIT AND CREDIT CARD FRAUD



On June 6, the governor signed into law Senate Bill 624 – which I sponsored – to crack down on debit and credit card theft.

Police officers from many agencies are coming into contact with individuals who possess debit/credit cards of other people. This is currently not illegal unless the cards are stolen, or the individual uses the card. Senate Bill 624 makes it a crime to knowingly possess a fraudulently obtained debit or credit card or device. It applies

to cloned and replicated cards as well. Law enforcement will still be required to prove the card was illegally taken or cloned; this bill will not make it unlawful to simply have someone else's card.

The other component of the new law makes stealing from a bank, trust company, savings and loan association or credit union a Class B felony, which is the same penalty for forcibly robbing a bank. A demand note, even if no weapon is displayed, has an implied threat with it. Tellers are just as frightened when a robber hands them a note as when they see a weapon or the threat of a weapon. The penalty should be the same.

Proudly serving the citizens of Butler, Carter, Dunklin, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Shannon and Stoddard counties.