

CAPITOL REPORT

STATE SENATOR
RON RICHARD
DISTRICT 32

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2012 Legislative Session



I am honored to serve as your state senator and pleased with the work we accomplished in the 2012 legislative session to balance our budget, increase protections for the elderly and eliminate governmental red tape. This publication highlights many of these accomplishments. If you have any questions about these issues or your state government, please don't hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ronald F. Richard".

CELL PHONES ADDED TO NO-CALL LIST

When the General Assembly passed legislation to create the state's No-Call List, cell phones were not as prominently used as they are today. At the time, most people still relied on landline phones, so language wasn't included in the initial No-Call bill to allow cell phones on the list.

We addressed the issue this year with the passage of House Bill 1549, which adds cell phones to Missouri's No-Call List. To add a home or cell phone number to the No-Call List, visit www.ago.mo.gov/nocalllaw.



Shown above, Sen. Richard speaks on the Senate floor.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

A 2010 Missouri court decision ruled that employees could be held liable for the injury of a co-worker in workplace accidents. This ruling had a profoundly negative effect on businesses throughout Missouri. It opened the door for numerous lawsuits, which were financially devastating to hard-working Missourians and employers. Employees often paid outrageous legal fees to settle these suits. It also forced business owners to carry burdensome insurance to cover these claims, money which could have been spent expanding and growing their businesses.

We dealt with the issue this year with the passage of House Bill 1540, which protects co-workers from being sued for their role in honest workplace accidents. This measure will prevent Missouri workers and employers from being victim to frivolous lawsuits. The change in Missouri law took effect on Aug. 28.

CUTTING RED TAPE

Despite signs our economy is beginning to recover from the economic downturn of four years ago, there are still thousands of Missourians struggling to find a job. It is vitally important that as lawmakers, we pass legislation to encourage job growth in the Show-Me State. We have to create a business environment that is conducive to the creation of quality jobs. As part of this effort, we passed Senate Bill 469, which addresses regulatory reform.

One of the biggest hurdles small businesses cite as preventing growth is government regulations. While many of these administrative rules are important for protecting citizens, there are a great deal that are redundant and unneeded. Senate Bill 469 requires departments to review state regulations on a regular basis to determine if those rules are duplicative, outdated or pose an unnecessary burden to small business owners. Eliminating governmental red tape is a critical step in expanding our state's economy and putting our friends and neighbors back to work.

PROTECTING THE ELDERLY & DISABLED

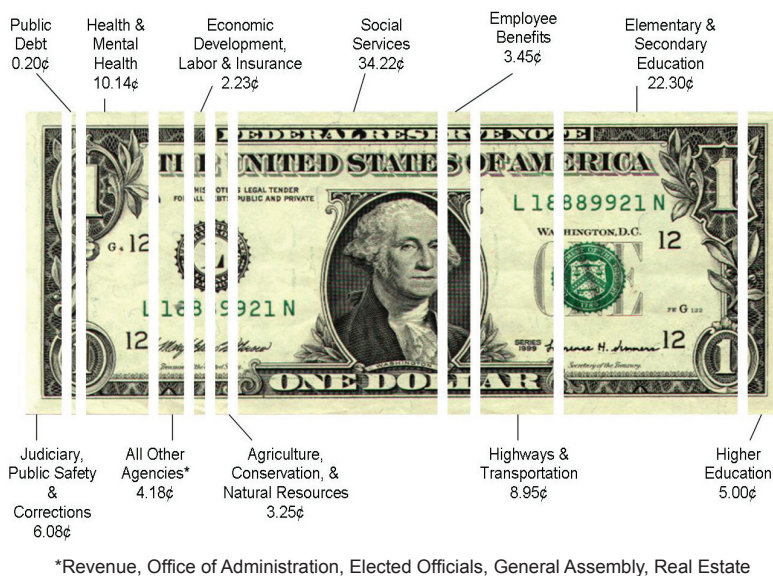
Elder abuse is a heinous crime that is devastating for senior citizens. According to the National Center on Elder Abuse, between one million and two million Americans age 65 or older have been injured, exploited or otherwise mistreated by a caregiver. In 2011, Missouri's Elder Abuse and Neglect Hotline received more than 17,000 reports of elder abuse, neglect or financial exploitation. Law enforcement also regularly encounter situations when a person uses his or her influence to take advantage of a senior citizen without crossing the line into outright force or intimidation. Unfortunately, Missouri law didn't have any kind of statute to address these crimes. This year, we passed Senate Bill 689, which adds undue influence to the acts that constitute abuse of the elderly and disabled. The measure will go far in preventing these types of crimes from occurring and bringing justice to the victims. The bill became law on Aug. 28.

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Passing the state budget is one of the most important tasks the Legislature undertakes each year. It's also the only task we're constitutionally required to complete. This year, we worked hard to craft a fiscally responsible budget that lives within our state's means. The final spending plan for Fiscal Year 2013 included a 2 percent raise for state employees who make up to \$70,000 annually.

Education remains one of our biggest priorities. We restored funding for higher education the governor cut in his original budget proposal, keeping those amounts level with the previous year. We also increased the K-12 school foundation formula by \$5 million. Of all the economic development measures we consider, providing a quality education for our students is the most beneficial.

Distribution of Each Tax Dollar



MOVING FORWARD

We must make economic development in our state a priority, and tax incentives are part of that goal. Tax credits are a tool. Used effectively, with careful oversight, they encourage activities that are beneficial to our state, from job creation to philanthropy.

I sponsored a couple of measures this year that would have created moderate, responsible tax incentives focused on expanding very specific industries. Senate Bill 584 would have offered sales and use tax exemptions to data storage centers looking to establish or relocate to Missouri. These businesses house computer servers that store digital information for credit card providers, online retailers and search engines. The advent of cloud computing and the exponential growth of the Internet have made data centers a billion-dollar industry. There's an estimated 7,000 of these centers currently in the United States, with more being built each year. It's an incredible opportunity for Missouri, but because we can't offer the same tax incentives that other states are offering, it's going to be difficult to draw those businesses here.

I also sponsored Senate Bill 585, which would have helped bring amateur sporting events, such as college sport championship games, to Missouri. The states that host these events bring in millions of tourism dollars. Not only does this benefit those existing businesses, it generates sorely needed state revenue. States across the nation are clamoring to bring these types of events to their area. Tax incentives are a part of that process. The bidding cycle for these sporting events is this year, and what type of incentives are offered will play a critical role in what states get to host these games. Missouri faces an uphill climb, though, because we failed to create the incentives necessary to bring those events to our area.

The continuing deadlock over how to reform a few select tax credit programs prevented either of these bills, and numerous other economic development measures, from moving forward. Both represented incredible opportunities for our state. Both were capped and included provisions preventing money from being spent unless the goal of the bills was achieved. And both got blocked because a few select lawmakers refuse to address any tax incentives, no matter how beneficial, until we fix a handful of existing ones.

This is a tragedy. It has and continues to prevent us from passing the legislation we need to move our state forward. It's also the reason we failed to renew tax credits for donating to pregnancy resource centers and food pantries this session. The people of Missouri are the ones who lose.

Missouri is not insulated. We're in a global economy competing with 49 other states for every business, for every job. And they are using tax incentives to lure new and existing companies to their areas. If we fail to keep up, we will be left behind. We cannot let that happen. I will continue fighting to see economic development a priority in our state.



Shown above, Sen. Richard, vice-chairman of the Senate Jobs, Economic Development and Local Government Committee, listens to testimony.

State Senator Ron Richard

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VISITING THE CAPITOL

One of my favorite parts of being a state senator is meeting with the constituents I represent, especially students who come to Jefferson City to visit the Capitol. It's important for our youth to see government in action and understand its effect on their lives. These boys and girls are the future leaders of our state. I fight everyday to make Missouri a place where they can grow and succeed. Below are some photos of the students and families from our district who stopped by my office this year. To schedule a visit to the Capitol, contact my office at (573) 751-2173.

