



SENATOR  
**S. KIKI CURLS**  
9TH DISTRICT

**LEGISLATIVE REVIEW**  
**2014**

*Dear Constituents,*

Once again, it is a great honor to serve as your voice in the Missouri Senate. I'm proud to fight on behalf of your interests as hard-working citizens of the 9<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District. One of the most important duties the Legislature undertakes each year is the crafting of the state's annual budget. It is a long process that involves going through the spending plan line-by-line and balancing our state's needs with the available funding. For the second year in a row, we were able to deliver the Fiscal Year 2015 budget to the governor a day ahead of the constitutional deadline.

As the ranking minority member on the Senate Appropriations Committee, I fought hard this year to expand and support programs that truly help our state's neediest citizens and secure funding for programs and organizations within the 9th Senatorial District. I was proud to see \$100,000 allocated to the Buck O'Neil Education Center, \$150,000 for the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum; \$100,000 for educational programs for students in the Kansas City Public School District; funding for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORC); \$100,000 for the World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial; and \$100,000 for the historic 18th & Vine Jazz District to support the Missouri Jazz Walk of Fame. These areas not only reflect our city's rich history, they also foster a healthy tourist industry in Kansas City, which aids local businesses and residents.

On a state scale, we increased funding to K-12 schools by a historic amount; provided more funding to Missouri's colleges and universities; and heavily supported educational programs to prepare our students for an ever-changing job market. Sadly, many of these funding items were withheld or vetoed by the governor. However, as revenues continue to increase, it is my hope that the governor will reevaluate our state's fiscal standing and release much of these increases.

We also secured funding this year for dental coverage for adults under Medicaid, which provides much-needed oral medical care to those who were regrettably cut from that system nearly a decade ago. Unfortunately, the governor decided to withhold this vital funding. In addition, I'm disappointed the General Assembly did not debate expanding overall health care coverage for our state this session. This failure was also expressed by a group of clergy members who staged a protest to support Medicaid expansion in our state and effectively shut down the Senate. Regrettably, there still remains staunch opposition to expanding Medicaid benefits to some 300,000 Missourians currently without insurance. I hope that we will continue to examine the countless ways Medicaid expansion could benefit our state and its citizens.

We have the ability to change the lives of more than a quarter million Missourians. That is real, long-lasting change, the kind we constantly strive for in the General Assembly. I hope next session we have an honest debate about this critical issue.

If you have any concerns or questions about state government, I urge you to call my District or Capitol offices. I'm here to work for you.

*S. Kiki Curls*

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## REPEALING LIFETIME BAN FOR FOOD STAMPS

I have spent years working on legislation that will make a difference for those Missourians looking to get back on their feet after turning down the wrong path. The General Assembly passed legislation I sponsored by a bipartisan vote, Senate Bill 680, which repeals the

lifetime ban for food stamp assistance in our state for those who have a drug felony conviction.

No other felony conviction bans individuals from receiving food stamp assistance; this includes those who are convicted of murder, child molestation and rape. It's unacceptable that those who served prison sentences for some of the most heinous crimes known to man are given government assistance, but those with felony drug convictions are banned *forever* from receiving the kind of aid they need to turn their lives around.

My legislation allows those individuals to receive these important benefits, ensuring those who want to return to society as productive citizens have the chance to move beyond the stigma of being a past offender. These are the types of steps we need to be examining if we're truly interested in rehabilitating offenders and reducing recidivism rates in Missouri.

This extremely important piece of legislation works on behalf of all state citizens, from those who utilize public assistance in the way it is tended, to those hard-working taxpayers who help support vital programs designed to provide their fellow Missourians with a way to get back on the right track. I'm proud the governor recognized the true bipartisan effort on Senate Bill 680 by signing it into law.

## CENTER FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

One of my goals as state senator for the 9th District is to develop and coordinate community partnerships with local neighborhoods. True change begins with people, at the ground level. It springs up organically in the form of non-profit and neighborhood organizations, made up of citizens who want to better the lives of those around them. These are noble and worthy goals. But, we have to give these groups the tools they need to enact meaningful and long-lasting change for individuals and families in the Kansas City area.

Neighborhood organizations often struggle to address a huge range of issues in their area with little to no resources. These groups often lack the basic technical assistance that could make their efforts more effective. Simply put, they sometimes need help and guidance to carry out their missions.

We had the opportunity this year to finally bring to life a project—long in development—that would

have provided these much-needed services to our community by creating the University of Missouri-Kansas City Center for Neighborhoods in the Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design. The center would have created a one-stop location in Kansas City where neighborhood leaders could access the available resources and capacities of UMKC, including access to data, training and workshop seminars, and hands-on assistance from faculty and staff.

Unfortunately, the governor vetoed the \$500,000 designated for this project. As a strong proponent of neighborhood growth and health, which is vital to the metropolitan area and its economy, I will continue to support the basic technical assistance and support services needed to maintain operations and improve our neighborhoods' effectiveness.

## IMPROVING EDUCATION BY SUPPORTING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS

While lawmakers assign their name to various bills they sponsor or carry through the Legislature, many times legislators add their own changes to measures which are known as amendments. This year, I offered an amendment to Senate Bill 492 that will expand the Missouri Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative, which is committed to improving education and supporting development of industries in the STEM fields. This amendment, which received overwhelming support in the upper chamber, is identical to legislation I sponsored this year in Senate Bill 941.

We must develop our future workforce in 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology by increasing our focus on preparing, attracting, training, and retaining skilled and educated citizens to work in critical areas of industries that are vital to our state's future in the competitive global market.

Thousands of information technology (IT) jobs available in Missouri are not filled because many high schools do not offer the curriculum to equip these students with the training they need to move into these careers. My amendment created programs such that students would have the opportunity to receive the skills and the IT certification needed to compete for these quality jobs.

Senate Bill 492 was signed into law and took effect Aug. 28. The governor vetoed the funding for this new program. Next year, I will fight to secure funding for this important STEM initiative.

Several student groups throughout the 9th District visited Jefferson City during the 2013-2014 school year. Senator Curls was happy to meet with Kansas City students from Crispus Attucks Elementary during their May visit.



## FIGHTING FOR OUR STATE'S STUDENTS

Senate Bill 493 was the culmination of bipartisan legislation coming together in order to reform Missouri's school accreditation and student transfer process. The underlying bill was a compromise among nine senate bills filed this session that changes how our state assigns classification designations to individual schools throughout Missouri.

An amendment I sponsored, which was added to the bill earlier during the regular legislative session, prohibits changing a public school's classification from accredited to unaccredited or provisionally accredited when there is no member serving on the State Board of Education who represents the congressional district where that school is located. Those living in our city should have the peace of mind knowing they have proper representation on the board making difficult decisions that affect thousands in our area.

We need to address the education of our state's students starting at the core, the curriculum pertains to each grade level, students receive the help they need to succeed, and children aren't just passed on to the next grade, setting in motion a plan that will surely fail our children.

Despite the veto of this important bill, my colleagues and I recognize the importance of providing our children with a world-class education and remain committed to addressing this issue in the upcoming legislative session.

## UPDATING MISSOURI'S CRIMINAL CODE

In a display of bipartisan support, lawmakers this session passed legislation designed to streamline Missouri's statutes regarding crimes and punishments, a major overhaul that hasn't been tackled in 30 years. Senate Bill 491 creates new classes of felonies; misdemeanors; reorganizes crimes to fit new penalties in state statutes; and adds additional crimes to provisions that allow for enhanced penalties for repeat offenders. Though signed into law, the measure will not take effect until Jan. 1, 2017. This bill will bring our state's criminal code into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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## 2014 PUBLIC HEALTH & SAFETY FAIR A SUCCESS

The 8th Annual Public Health & Safety Fair, which I hosted, was held in mid-June at the Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center. This important event provided citizens with the tools they need to help fight and prevent chronic disease while supporting a healthy lifestyle.

Services and activities included health screenings, more than 40 car and booster seats professionally installed for those who met federal poverty income level requirements, and the fire department was on hand to provide CPR training. We also gave away 100 new bicycles to area youth.

Citizens came out to the event in record numbers, more than 1,000 people, to take advantage of all the wonderful services and activities planned for individuals of all ages. Events like these help build community partnerships and provide those in the Kansas City area with access to beneficial healthcare services, such as eye exams and immunizations, as well as blood pressure, dental, diabetes, mammograms and body mass index (BMI) screenings.

I am proud of the support we received from the numerous organizations and businesses that teamed up with us to promote this year's Public Health & Safety Fair. It's through these collaborative efforts and events that we can make a difference in disparities found throughout our communities.



<Left: Excited kids lined up for a chance to win one of 100 free bicycles given away that day.

>Right: Families were given vouchers to purchase fruits and vegetables from the Truman Healthy Harvest Bus.

