

**SENATOR
ERIC**

SCHMITT



- Ending Taxation by Citation
- New MO ABLE Act
- Senior Savings Protection Act
- MOST Program Updates
- Legislative Successes

2015 Legislative Update

SENATE BILL 5: ENDING TAXATION BY CITATION

Government exists to serve our citizens, not to extort money from them to fund bloated and inefficient bureaucracies. Unfortunately, many cities and municipal courts across Missouri, especially in the St. Louis Region, enforce a broken system that allows local governments to treat Missourians like ATMs in order to fund their bloated budgets.

I am proud to say I sponsored Senate Bill 5, a bipartisan-supported comprehensive reform bill designed to drastically curb this abusive “taxation by citation” strategy. Prior to the passage of Senate Bill 5, municipalities could fund as much as 30 percent of their budgets with revenue from traffic tickets. With the enactment of Senate Bill 5, municipalities across the state will no longer be able to fund their budgets with revenue primarily from traffic tickets. In St. Louis County, municipalities will only be able to fund up to 12.5 percent of their budgets with revenue from traffic tickets.

Senate Bill 5 also institutes reforms for municipal courts across the state. These changes include a prohibition on jailing someone for a minor traffic violation, such as a broken taillight or expired tags. Courts will also be required to offer alternative payment plans and community service options to accommodate individuals who cannot pay their entire fine all at once.

The bill also places requirements on St. Louis County municipalities to ensure they are providing an adequate level of services to their residents. If municipalities cannot meet the minimum standards, they could eventually face disincorporation. These standards include having an annual balanced budget, auditing the city’s finances, and if the city has a police department, requiring it to be accredited. These are common sense standards that residents expect of their cities and they should be met.

Legislators on both sides of the aisle recognized the need for this legislation. I was humbled to lead the charge in bringing real change to our communities, and helping to restore our residents’ confidence in their law enforcement and local governments. Residents can no longer be treated as ATMs by their cities. Residents must be respected as valuable members of their community, and Senate Bill 5 will go a long way in making that a reality.

WHAT SENATE BILL 5 DOES:

- Reduces how much of a city’s budget can come from traffic tickets from 30 percent to 12.5 percent in St. Louis County.
- Requires St. Louis County municipalities to provide an adequate level of services, including a balanced budget, audited city finances and an accredited police department.
- Provides for alternative sentencing options in our municipal courts.
- Allows for municipal disincorporation to be decided by voters if a city collects more revenue than permitted from traffic tickets or fails to meet the minimum level of services for its residents.

SENATOR SCHMITT’S LEGISLATIVE SUCCESSES



SENATE BILL 5 provides comprehensive municipal court reform and ends taxation by citation.

SENATE BILL 174 creates the Missouri Achieving a Better Life Experience Act.

SENATE BILL 244 creates the Senior Savings Protection Act by permitting certain individuals to report an occurrence or suspected occurrence of financial exploitation of qualified adults.

SENATE BILL 366 modifies the provisions of the Missouri Higher Education Savings Program.



MOST (Missouri 529 College Savings Plan)

Education attainment is at the heart of the American Dream. One way I have worked to keep it a reality is by filing Senate Bill 366 to make it easier for parents and students to save for college.

Senate Bill 366 has two important provisions. First, it allows refunds of qualified higher education expenses to be deposited back into a 529 account without any penalties. If a student uses 529 funds to pay a semester's tuition but has to stop attending, perhaps to address a family or medical issue, he or she can put that tuition refund back into the 529 account and not be penalized.

Second, the bill also allows individuals to provide a direct deposit from their Missouri tax return into a 529 account. This streamlines savings for families and gives them more options.

SENIOR SAVINGS PROTECTION ACT

Senate Bill 244 protects our most vulnerable residents, and focuses on our state's senior citizens. This bill allows financial advisors to stop disbursements from a senior's account if a fraudulent scheme is afoot.

Unfortunately, we are all too familiar with these schemes drawn up to defraud our seniors. Fraudulent emails that urge immediate payments to release kidnapped loved ones, and fake endeavors made to look like worthy causes can jeopardize our seniors' life savings.

This bill allows investment firms and state law enforcement to hit a brief "pause button" and investigate the potential scam before someone's life savings are lost forever, and if no impropriety is found and the short window has closed, the transaction goes forward.

The bill also protects financial advisors who reasonably believe fraud is in play by removing liability if they temporarily stop a disbursement.

This common sense solution that was advocated for by organizations dedicated to the protection of seniors and our most vulnerable, will help our citizens rest easier knowing there is another layer of protection against potential wrongdoing.

MO ABLE Act

I sponsored Senate Bill 174, which sets up the Missouri Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) program. This program will allow individuals with disabilities to save money for their future expenses the same way parents now save for their child's college tuition under the MOST 529 program.

Senate Bill 174 was signed into law and will allow those with disabilities to save up to \$14,000 a year, and up to \$325,000 over their lifetime. Individuals can use money saved in the account for education, transportation, housing and other needs they will have in the future.

It is especially profound that we passed the MO ABLE Act this year, as our nation marks the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I continually look for ways to help the most vulnerable in our communities, and I'm very proud that Missouri is one of the first states in the country to enact this legislation, which will empower families and individuals with disabilities to lead better and fuller lives.

State Senator Eric Schmitt

201 W. Capitol Ave Rm. 320

Jefferson City MO 65101

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#PORK STEAK REBELLION

In February, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) funded a study of the environmental emissions from backyard barbecues, which may lead to regulations concerning our grills. Yes, that's right, our barbecues. Therefore, I filed a resolution calling for the EPA to back off its intrusive invasion into our grills and led the Pork Steak Rebellion. My hashtag #PORKSTEAKREBELLION started as a simple movement on Twitter and quickly swept the nation.

Although we had some good hearted fun with this, it does expose the overreach of an agency that has clearly overstepped its bounds. If you come after our barbecues and the grilling of our pork steaks, or whatever it is we enjoy grilling, the 15th Senate District will come together in a bipartisan effort and tell you to *"Keep your hands off our grills!"*



CONTACT SENATOR ERIC SCHMITT

201 W. Capitol Ave., Rm. 320

Jefferson City, MO 65101

(573) 751-2853

www.senate.mo.gov/Schmitt

Twitter: @Eric_Schmitt

Instagram: ericschmittmo

