



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Senate Passes and Sends Bill Rewriting
Missouri's Public School Funding Formula to the House**

JEFFERSON CITY – A bill rewriting the state's public school funding formula based on students' needs today received final approval of the Senate. Sen. Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, authored the bill and said its support came from endless hours of public hearings, discussion and work on creating the new formula.

"This formula benefits school districts across our state," Shields said. "More importantly it provides a funding formula that gives every student an opportunity for the best education possible."

The new formula, created in Senate Bill 287, is based on students' needs rather than local property tax assessments which is the current practice.

It begins with a school district's average daily attendance and then calculates additional credits for each student beyond the state average percentage enrolled in special programs within that district. Some of the student needs that are included in the calculation for extra credits include students that qualify for free or discount lunch programs, students enrolled in special education, and students with low English proficiency.

Once those credits are added to the average daily attendance of the district, that total is multiplied by the proposed state minimum spending amount per student which is \$6,117.

Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, stressed in his opening address the importance of the legislature, not the courts, in rewriting the state's formula.

"The current funding formula was broken and it was important that we fix it, not the courts," Gibbons said. "It is a difficult issue because it pits every district in the state against each other and Sen. Shields has done an excellent job in crafting a formula that addresses every student's needs."

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The bill also introduces another new facet known as the dollar value modifier. It takes into consideration the cost of living in each school district and adjusts a district's total amount by how much education a dollar can buy in various parts of the state.

Gibbons was successful in offering an amendment removing the cap from the dollar value modifier.

Another amendment adopted by the body in earlier debate sets aside \$10 million in grants to be accessed by small districts that have less than 300 students in their average daily attendance. These smaller school districts can apply for portions of the grant money through the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for services ranging from education to transportation.

Shields said it is estimated that it will cost the state more than \$685 million to fund the state's portion of the new formula. The bill calls for the funding increases to be phased in over the course of the next five fiscal years, beginning July 1, 2006.

The measure now moves to the House for similar consideration. If approved there it will be sent to the governor for his approval.

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