



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the
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Sheltered Workshops

JEFFERSON CITY – Beginning December 1st, Missouri lawmakers can pre-file bills for the upcoming legislative session. Bills that are filed early are among the first to be read on the floor and assigned to committee, improving the chances those bills will be voted out of committee and sent back to the floor for debate.

This month I pre-filed legislation to gradually increase payments to sheltered workshops.

Sheltered workshops are non-profit small businesses employing people who are deemed to be unable to work in a competitive work environment due to mental retardation, head injuries, blindness, deafness and other physical or mental disabilities. Some of the tasks that disabled people are contracted to perform include packaging and assembling products, sorting and stuffing mail, janitorial duties and grounds maintenance.

As with many businesses, operating costs are high. However, for Missouri's sheltered workshops, the strain of these costs is even more cumbersome, because unlike those in many other states, they operate by mostly relying on contracted work and the revenue that work generates. Increased supervision also is needed, which adds to the overhead costs. Many sheltered workshops receive local tax support through special boards.

As of now, workshops are reimbursed at a rate of \$13, multiplied by the number of 6-hour or longer days worked by disabled workers.

The legislation I pre-filed, Senate Bill 77, will increase the reimbursements each year, so that by July of 2010, workshops will be receiving up to \$18 for every 6-hour or longer day worked by its disabled employees, subject to appropriation.

Missouri's 93 well-run sheltered workshops, which employ nearly 8,000 disabled people and close to 900 non-disabled individuals, greatly contribute to the state's commerce and to communities' well-being. SB 77 would help ensure the positive effects of sheltered workshops will continue.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.state.mo.us

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.