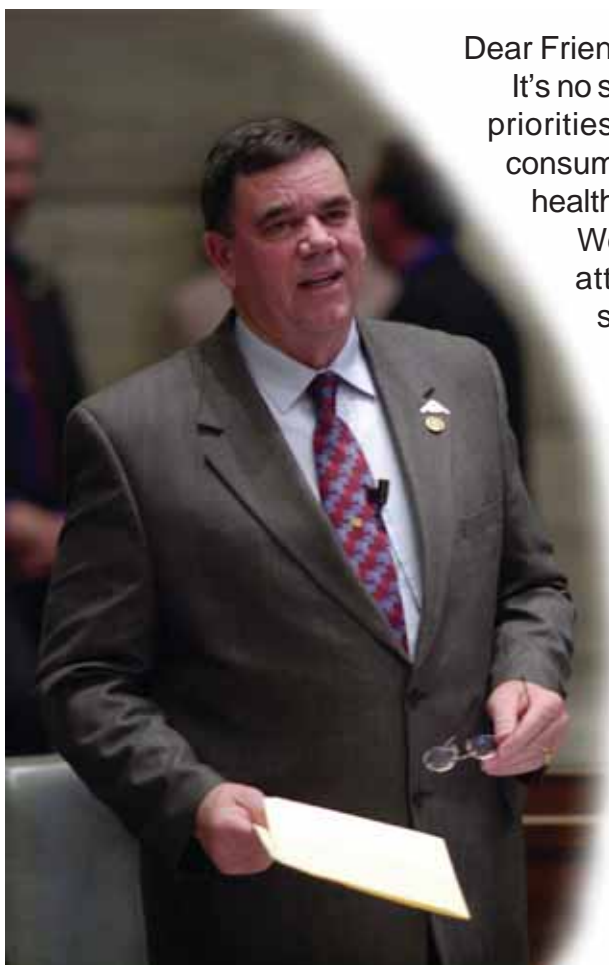


STATE SENATOR

District 21

BILL STOUFFER

Legislative Report - 2007



Dear Friends,

It's no surprise that health care and education were among the top priorities this legislative session. The Legislature promoted consumer choice, wellness and preventive care as ways to lower health care costs for everyone.

We were able to invest in helping more Missouri students attend colleges and universities by greatly expanding scholarships and higher education funding.

Awareness was raised pertaining to the need for stricter safety requirements at state-licensed group homes.

In addition to these issues, lawmakers addressed legislation dealing with shielding Social Security benefits from state tax, establishing biodiesel standards, and protecting Missourians' most basic right to protect themselves and their property.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you in the Missouri Senate. I enjoy working for the people of rural Missouri.

Best Wishes,

Bill Stouffer



Sen. Stouffer with U.S. Rep. Ike Skelton. Photo by Cynthia Hiles.

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Funding Ways to Improve I-70 & I-44



Today's Crowded Roadways

As chairman of the Senate Transportation Committee and a legislator who has Interstate 70 running through the heart of his senate district, I drafted Senate Bill 310 to tackle the issue of overcrowding on Interstates 70 and 44.



8-Lane Concept

These two major interstates were designed and constructed more than 50 years ago. The roadways were built with a 20-year life, and with the volume of freight traffic increasing every year, the old pavement plan cannot keep up with today's traffic flow.



Truck Access

The new measure would have included four lanes of highway separated by a concrete barrier. A 30 to 60 foot median would physically separate cars and trucks.

The bill also proposed a one-cent sales tax increase on the state ballot to fund the project. This modest increase, set to expire in 2018, would eliminate a toll's added impact on the cost of freight, and the wallets of Missourians when we ourselves use the highway. Tolls are more expensive to the consumer. If tolls are implemented in the state, the opportunity for Missouri to be the distribution point of the nation would no longer be available.



Rural Area

The measure, which would modernize transportation in Missouri, never moved out of the Senate Transportation Committee. However, look for similar language in the General Assembly next year.



Urban Area

\$70-90 million is required to keep I-70 and I-44 in good or better condition:

- 2,380 lane miles, 510 bridges
- Resurface every 8-10 years
- Bridge rehabilitation and maintenance
- Bridge replacement
- Guard cable installation and maintenance

What The Plan Would Cost:

- Reconstruction/Widening of I-70 is estimated to cost \$3.1 billion
- More analysis of I-44 corridor is needed but its longer length suggests its cost could be \$4 billion
- Truck lane option could add 5-10 percent to improvement cost



Increasing the Budget Without Raising Taxes

Highlights from the budget include record amounts for education and health care, a tax cut for seniors, protections for women and children, and a fiscally prudent reserve fund. A strong commitment to education is reflected in the budget.

The increases for higher education represent the second consecutive year universities and community colleges have benefited from action taken by the General Assembly. The ability to provide more funding has been largely due to the turnaround in Missouri's economy. Due to the ability to make key policy changes and the record growth in job creation, Missouri has seen more than 94,000 new jobs created since January 2005.

- \$21.4 billion budget passed while maintaining a record-setting \$200 million reserve
- Half a billion more to education and Medicaid since 2005
- 94,000 + jobs have been created

Distribution of Each Tax Dollar FY 2008 Missouri Operating Budget All Funds: \$21.4 Billion



Nearly \$8 million in new funding will go to one of the nation's most expansive children's health insurance programs known as CHIPS. Several other budget items include spending \$3.9 million for autism treatment, nearly \$1 million for the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Program, and \$219,000 for four additional senior nutrition centers across the state.



Preventing the Cost of Poor Health

Creating a new health-care system to help Missouri citizens receive the most basic care has been on the minds of many after cuts were made to the Medicaid system back in 2005. Senate Bill 577, also known as the "Missouri Health Improvement Act of 2007," creates Mo HealthNet, which focuses on preventive care over more costly reactive treatments, such as emergency room visits. The bill also emphasizes transparency and consumer choice. People should have a higher quality of life while at the same time staying healthy, and that is what this bill enables.

The bill includes incentives for doctors to decrease overall costs. This is a major refocus in the way we deliver health care and a major step forward for the people of the state. Through this bill, physicians can receive more funding for reducing hospital stays. A program has also been created to allow employers to use tax-free dollars to pay the premiums for private insurance for uninsured workers.

The new system provides a health-care home to help patients in accessing health care. This serves as a patient's home base for both prevention and when they need medical attention. These preventive measures allow people to take responsibility for their own health care and introduce the patient back into the equation.

The old Medicaid system did not focus on wellness, prevention and personal responsibility. By providing better health care and lowering costs for consumers, we can provide this new program, which will save money, but most importantly help save and improve the lives of Missourians.



Your Home Is Your Castle — And You Have A Right To Defend It

Protecting your home and your property is one of the most basic rights Missourians should have. This year the General Assembly worked to ensure these rights.

Senate Bill 62 allows a person who has a reasonable fear of imminent peril or death to use deadly force against his or her attacker. The attacker must have unlawfully or forcefully entered the defender's dwelling or vehicle.

Lawmakers put certain safeguards in the bill, including a provision that says that defensive force may not be used against someone who has a legal right to be in the vehicle or home. The legislation also repeals the requirement that Missouri residents must get permits from the local sheriff before buying a handgun.

Another piece of legislation that deals with protecting yourself and your property is Senate Bill 257. During an emergency, the state, any political subdivision, or any person can not prohibit or restrict the lawful possession, transfer, sale, transportation, storage, display, or use of firearms or ammunition. Both SB 62 and 257 have been signed by the governor.



Sen. Bill Stouffer and Rep. Mike McGhee (far right) sponsored a golf tournament earlier this year to benefit residents of local Habilitation Centers. In its first year, the event raised over \$10,000!

On The Ballot

House Joint Resolution 7 proposes a constitutional amendment establishing English as the language for all official proceedings in Missouri. If voters approve the measure in November 2008, all public meetings would be conducted in English. In some states, communities have large populations who speak a second language and have begun conducting meetings in a language other than English.

Would you like English to be the official language of Missouri?



Yes
 No

Rural Missouri Grants

The following cities received state grants this year:

Salisbury — \$50,000 used for the demolition of blighted downtown buildings.

Northland Foundation, Inc., Kearney — \$65,000 used for seniors to live independently longer, with nutritional meals and recreational activities.

New Franklin — \$250,000 used for the rehabilitation of the Thomas Hickman House, a historic landmark in central Missouri.

Land Learning Foundation — \$214,250 used for a two-part youth mentoring program in central Missouri.

Biodiesel Standard Would Benefit Rural Missourians

Few issues unite Republicans and Democrats like renewable fuels. Both ethanol and biodiesel continue to gain momentum as opportunities to provide a homegrown solution to our dependency on foreign oil, stimulate the state's economy, and improve the environment. This session, I proposed Senate Bill 204, an act that would require all diesel fuel sold in Missouri to contain at least a 5 percent blend of biodiesel, also known as "B5."

According to the Energy Information Administration, the U.S. spends about \$475,000 a minute on foreign oil. Although I typically oppose government involvement in the marketplace of supply and demand, I feel it is more important to secure a source of homegrown fuels that makes our country stronger and less dependent on foreign oil.

It is important to note that ethanol and biodiesel are two very different fuels. Good-quality biodiesel provides lubricity that adds life to engines. However, poor-quality biodiesel can lead to problems relating to long-term storage and cold-weather operability. Like regular diesel, one bad load of biodiesel can be a "black eye" for the entire industry.

SB 204 would have required all producers to meet stringent quality standards to ensure this does not happen. Standards included a cold-flow test to address winter challenges, a system similar to solutions found in Minnesota, the first state to enact this type of standard.

It was an honor for me to work with the Missouri Soybean Association and other groups to shepherd this bill through the legislative process. Similar to last year's ethanol standard, this legislation included a price mechanism that protects consumers from higher prices if biodiesel becomes more expensive than regular diesel. There were also exemptions for certain diesel-powered machines, including engines for rail locomotives and nuclear power plants.

SB 204 never reached the floor for debate. However, expect to see similar legislation drafted next session. It is my hope that some type of biodiesel standard might someday be enacted on a national level.



Some of Senator Stouffer's Committee Memberships:

- Transportation, Chair
- Agriculture, Vice-Chair
- Seniors, Families and Public Health
- Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight
- Joint Committee on Transportation Oversight, Chair
- Health Facilities Review Committee (CON)
- Missouri Rx Plan Advisory Commission, Vice-Chair
- Missouri Military Preparedness and Enhancement Commission
- Health Care Stabilization Fund Feasibility Board, Chair



Serving Rural Missouri



Caring for Missouri's Seniors

Putting Money Back Into Your Wallet

Missouri's seniors have paid into Social Security all their working lives and should not have to pay taxes on the program's benefits. That's why lawmakers this year approved a measure that phases in an income tax exemption on Social Security benefits, Social Security disability payments, and certain non-private retirement benefits.

The state was treating the money collected from these taxes as income and the federal tax structure should not be imposed on Missouri seniors.

Due to a thriving economy and continued growth in new jobs, Missouri has a projected budget surplus of \$200 million. House Bill 444 puts more money back into the wallets of Missourians, especially our older family members and friends.

Missouri was one of just 15 states that still taxed Social Security benefits. This year the Missouri Legislature passed House Bill 444 which will eliminate this tax over time.

This phase-in allows the budget to grow and accept the deductions without putting Missouri in a financial bind — greatly increasing the number of people eligible while having a minimal impact on revenue.

Qualifying non-private retirement benefits (including plans for firefighters and police officers, railroad workers, teachers, as well as veterans and certain federal employees) will also be exempt from state taxes up to the maximum Social Security benefit (currently \$32,500) by 2012. An income threshold of \$85,000 for individuals or \$100,000 for married couples applies.

We should go out of our way to help those who have given so much to us.



Seniors deserve to live their lives with dignity and respect.

Living Out Life With Dignity and Respect

Imagine family and friends gathered around a loved one who is about to die — they are in the comfort of their own home and they wish to leave this world surrounded by their family and friends. The patient has received hospice care and knows the end is near. Due to the unusual activity occurring at the patient's residence, a neighbor becomes concerned and dials 9-1-1.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are required to resuscitate an individual when called to the scene of an emergency. Even though this patient was pronounced dead by a hospice nurse at the home, the EMTs continue resuscitation efforts until they reach the hospital where the patient is then pronounced clinically dead.

If these events are not traumatic enough, police are called to the family home where crime tape is hung and interrogations on family members are performed. This horrible incident was nobody's fault — emergency responders were just doing their job.

This year, legislation was drafted in response to a growing number of Missourians who wish to live out their lives at home with family members and hospice care rather than in a hospital.

House Bill 182 requires that a copy of a do-not-resuscitate order must be included as the first page of a patient's record. The order may be carried out by a patient or a patient's representative and the patient's attending physician. The bill has been signed by the governor.



Missouri Rx Plan Advisory Commission:

As vice-chair, I am dedicated to helping seniors with the cost of prescription drugs. For more information on the Missouri Rx Plan, call 1-800-375-1406.

Legislation that Passed

Abortion — HB 1055 applies surgical-level operating standards on abortion clinics, and creates the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Services Program and the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Public Awareness Program.

Assisted Care — HB 952 requires sprinkler systems in most long-term care facilities by 2012.

Economic Development, Fuel Tax — HB 327 enacts numerous commerce-growing provisions, such as cattle tax credits, and exempts school buses and mass transportation from motor fuel taxes. (vetoed)

Higher Education — SB 389 (MOHELA) increases accountability standards, caps tuitions, and facilitates campus construction.

Health Care — SB 577 reforms the reactive Medicaid system with prevention-focused Mo HealthNet and expands Ticket-to-Work Program. (see p. 3)

Health Insurance — HB 818 establishes the Missouri Health Insurance Portability & Accountability Act.

Labor — SB 339 lifts requirements for “project labor agreements” on public building ventures.

Language — HJR 7 asks voters to amend the state Constitution to make English the language of all official proceedings in the state. (see p. 4)

Personal Protection — SB 257 bans authorities from confiscating firearms during a state of emergency. (see p. 4)

Public Safety — SB 198 makes it a Class A felony to distribute controlled substances within 1,000 feet of a public or private park.

Self Defense — SB 62 removes the duty to retreat before using deadly force to defend against intruders. (see p. 4)

Seniors, Tax Cut — HB 444 exempts certain Social Security and retirement benefits from state income tax. (see p. 6)



Tax Credit — HB 453 gives tax credits for donations to food pantries.

Identification, REAL ID — HCR 20 calls on the U.S. Congress to repeal the REAL ID Act of 2005.

Legislation that Failed

Farming — SB 364 would eliminate local health ordinances in large scale livestock operations and enact statewide standards.

Gaming/Gambling — SB 430 would repeal Missouri’s casino loss limit.

Helmet Law — HB 155 would allow motorcyclists over 21 to ride helmet-less.

Immunizations — SB 514 would allow sixth grade girls to receive vaccinations for the human papilloma virus.

Inspections, Public Safety and Seatbelts — SB 17 would repeal motor vehicle safety inspections of certain motor vehicles, make the seatbelt law applicable to all drivers and passengers, and increase the ability of law enforcement to cite non-seatbelt wearers.

Minimum Wage — SB 255 would reinstate federal standards for overtime wages including exemptions for firefighters and law enforcement officers.

A complete list of bills can be found online at www.senate.mo.gov

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State Auditor Susan Montee - Room 121	573.751.4824
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Dept. of Health and Senior Services P.O. Box 570, Jefferson City, MO 65102	573.751.6400
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Department of Natural Resources P.O. Box 176, Jefferson City, MO 65102	1.800.361.4827
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Department of Revenue 301 W. High, Jefferson City, MO 65101	573.751.4450
Department of Social Services 221 W. High St., P.O. Box 1527, Jefferson City, MO 65102	573.751.4815
Department of Transportation 105 W. Capitol, P.O. Box 270, Jefferson City, MO 65102	1.888.275.6636

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