

Column For Week of March 23, 2009

Senator Eric Schmitt

Weekly Column

15th District



[Website](#) | [Email Me](#) | [Biography](#) | [Newsroom](#) | [Audio & Video](#)

Priority Legislation Discussed

Autism, Assessment Reform Legislation Move Forward

This is our first week back from the mid-session break, and the Senate went right back to business. Being the second half of the legislative session, there is more floor activity as bills move through the legislative process. This week, two priorities important to me and to our district received attention: fairness in property assessment and providing autism services **(A new clip of debate on the autism is available to view by clicking on the Audio & Video link above).**

[Senate Joint Resolution 5](#): Legislation I sponsored to increase accountability in property taxation for the St. Louis area received approval from the Senate this week. The measure is a constitutional amendment that, if approved by voters, would require the assessor in St. Louis County to be elected, rather than appointed. The legislation makes sure you, the voters, have a say in who holds the office of assessor in St. Louis County. There has been a lot of talk lately in our area, and throughout St. Louis County, about how to ensure that property tax bills reflect changes in the market. This legislation would ensure more accountability and transparency for the taxpayers. Senate Joint Resolution 5 now moves to the House where it must be approved by a House committee before being debated on the floor.

[Senate Bill 167](#) : This week, I also had the opportunity to speak about an issue that is very important to me. **Autism is a disorder that affects 1 in every 150 children**, including my son, Stephen. I have seen first-hand the challenges families and individuals living with

autism deal with, and this landmark legislation will provide real hope and opportunity for thousands of Missourians to realize their full potential. The legislation would require most health carriers that issue or renew health benefit plans to provide coverage for diagnosis and treatment of individuals up to age 18. The legislation would also restrict health carriers from refusing to issue or renew coverage based solely on the fact that an individual is diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder. My number one concern with this legislation is that families living with autism who need access to vital care and services are able to receive it.

([Click here](#) to see debate on the Senate floor about Senate Bill 167.)

We also addressed some of the following bills this week:

- [Senate Bill 291](#), an omnibus education bill, was discussed into the early morning hours on Thursday when it received an initial vote of approval. Along with a variety of education based measures, I amended the bill to include my legislation on the “Parents Bill of Rights”. This provision allows parents in Missouri to be clear on their rights when attending an I.E.P. for their child.
- [HB 14](#), the \$312 million spending bill fills in budget gaps for the remainder of the 2009 fiscal year, which runs through June 30, 2009. The House approved our changes to the legislation, effectively sending it to the governor.
- [Senate Bill 58](#), the comprehensive transportation bill. Among other provisions, the legislation establishes a drunken driving risk reduction awareness program and prohibits the issuance of an automated photo red light camera citation unless the driver is clearly identifiable by a police officer.
- [Senate Bill 65](#) would expand Missouri’s Do Not Call list to include personal cell phone numbers.

During the remainder of the session, more bills will progress through the legislative process, and I will continue to push to make sure that these, as well as other priorities are addressed. In the upcoming months we will address the budget, and I am sure this will also inspire quite a bit of discussion and debate. As our work progresses, I will continue to share our actions with you.

This week, I enjoyed visits from several groups and individuals including: Claudine Chastain, who came by to talk about Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA); Josh Foster, Andy Simpson, Mike Stachiw, Pat Hedge, Matt Gonzalez, Jack LaFontain, Mike Shaw, Thomas Finkenkiller, Will LaChance, and Ben Kremer from the DeSmet Political Action Club; and Sarah Schwegel of St. Louis, former MDA national goodwill ambassador, who came to Jefferson City to testify on Senate Bill 544.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns. Please feel free to contact me using the information below. If you would like to begin receiving this column regularly, click on the subscribe link on the bottom of the page.

Thank you,
Senator Eric Schmitt

Contact Information

Capitol Office State Capitol Building Room 334 Jefferson City, MO 65101	Website: http://www.senate.mo.gov/schmitt	Phone Number: 573.751.2853
--	--	--------------------------------------

[Subscribe](#) | [Unsubscribe](#)