

# State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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## Ensuring Farmers' Access to Groundwater Supply

A Senate panel recently heard testimony in support of bill I am sponsoring designed as a preventive measure to protect southeast Missouri farmers' access to vital groundwater for irrigating crops.

[Senate Bill 556](#), which was heard by the Senate Agriculture, Food Production and Outdoor Resources Committee, would prohibit certain large users of water from unduly disrupting farm irrigation activities within the Southeast Missouri Regional Water District. A major water user would include any person, firm, corporation, or the state of Missouri, its agencies or corporations, and any other political subdivision of Missouri, their agencies or corporations, with a water source and equipment necessary to withdraw or divert 100,000 gallons or more per day from any stream, river, lake, well, spring or other water source.

This measure builds upon the wise decision the citizens of the 25<sup>th</sup> District made when they encouraged legislation in 1992 to create the regional water district. While the water-sharing practices have not posed a problem yet, it's very important to ensure access to groundwater and no interruption of customary irrigation activities of southeast Missouri farmers in case the matter is ever challenged. Under the bill's provisions, if any violation would occur, the attorney general or parties affected would be able to file an action for an injunction.

Missouri is fifth in the U.S. for rice production and is the most productive farming region in the state overall. We're fortunate to have wonderfully rich soils deposited by the Mississippi River and easy access to the water table. This measure would ensure the availability — and legal protection — of that essential groundwater for area farmers.

Speaking of rice... the annual Rice Day sponsored by the Missouri Rice Research and Merchandising Council will be held at the Capitol on April 1. The popular event features rice-inspired dishes made with rice grown in southeast Missouri and is a great

opportunity to showcase our state's important rice industry.

In another matter, District residents in Wayne and Butler counties and nearby communities may want to check out the 17<sup>th</sup> annual "Keep Baker Beautiful Day" on Sat., April 18, at Sam A. Baker State Park near Patterson. The event, sponsored by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, recognizes Earth Day and Missouri Beautification Month by getting the park in shape for the upcoming season. There will be assignments for all ages, and the event runs from 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. Bring a pair of work gloves and some drinking water.

The Legislative session is moving into high gear, and I look forward to continuing the important work ahead and in sharing important information with you on the latest legislative developments.

As always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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