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Historic Winter Storm Makes Its Mark

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By Rob Mayer

It's been more than five years since our state has experienced the same winter-weather conditions that blanketed much of Missouri this past week. I want to commend the hard work and dedication of the many crews and organizations that came together to prepare for and react to this dangerous storm.

Before the blizzard made its severe impact on Jefferson City, my colleagues and I in the Senate gave first-round approval to a bill that would ban texting while driving for all Missourians. In 2009, the Legislature passed House Bill 62 – an omnibus crime bill that made it illegal for those 21 and younger to text while driving. The bill we voted on this week would ban texting whiling driving for everyone. However, Senate Bill 11 would exempt drivers using hand-held mobile phones and voice-operated or hands-free devices to send texts. A final vote in the Senate would send the measure to the House for similar consideration.

The Senate Jobs, Economic Development and Local Government Committee also met before lawmakers adjourned for the week to give its approval to two measures that would help get Missourians back to work in lasting and growing industries that offer good pay and much-needed benefits. In my opening day address to the Senate, I stressed how important it is for lawmakers to pass legislation that would allow employers in our state to invest in hiring new workers instead of growing government through higher taxes.

Legislation passed out of the Senate Jobs Committee will do just that. Senate Bill 18 would freeze the amount of franchise taxes a corporation pays to the amount paid in 2010. Senate Bill 19 goes one step further by phasing out the franchise tax over a five-year period. Businesses should not have to pay a tax just to be in business. Corporations already pay taxes on income earned by the corporation, sales taxes on some business inputs, and property taxes on land, structures, and personal property. The franchise tax just taxes these activities and property again. Most states do not have both a corporate franchise tax and corporate income tax. That is why we should stop this double taxation on employers so they can invest in hiring new workers in our state. Both SB 18 and 19 received first round approval on the Senate floor – coming one step closer to making the Senate’s plan to spur job creation and help Missouri families thrive a reality.

We are also still working to make sure your voice is heard by adopting a resolution urging Missouri’s attorney general to join a lawsuit challenging the federal health care reform act. Last November, 71 percent of Missourians who voted in support of Proposition C made a clear and firm stand – they do not want to be penalized for refusing to purchase private health insurance nor have their rights infringed upon in regard to offering or accepting direct payment for lawful health care.

A recent U.S. District Court ruling in Florida, which struck down the entire federal health care law because its requirement that Americans buy health insurance is unconstitutional, further enforces the need for our state to join the lawsuit filed by more than 25 states. These states recognize the violation of our federal government because “the Constitution nowhere authorizes the United States to mandate, either directly or under threat of penalty, that all citizens and legal residents have qualifying health care coverage.”

I recently signed onto a letter with Lieutenant Governor Kinder and House Speaker Tilley addressed to our state’s attorney general calling on him to participate in this historic lawsuit in order to defend Missourians’ right to choose whether or not they want to purchase health care as well as protect their personal liberties if they decide to opt out of this purchase. Unfortunately, Attorney General Koster has remained silent on this issue rather than taking action to protect our state’s citizens from being forced to buy health insurance. Would he rather have a one-size-fits-all policy rather than allowing states, including Missouri, to find the best health care solutions for its citizens? It’s my hope that we take action on this now in order to defend the majority of Missourians who count on us here in Jefferson City to serve as their voice in state government.

I would also like to highlight many of the new features on my official Senate website. By visiting www.senate.mo.gov/mayer, citizens can share their ideas on how to “reboot”

state government, listen to and watch my opening day address to the Missouri Senate, request a courtesy resolution honoring a special event, and sign up to receive the latest news coming out of my office using my RSS feed. When you subscribe to this feed, updated information from the feed, including my weekly columns, press releases, and multimedia advisories, is automatically downloaded to your specified electronic device and can be viewed using most web browser programs.

Please feel free to contact me throughout the year with any comments, questions, or issues using the information listed below and on my website at www.senate.mo.gov/mayer.

Rob Mayer, R-Dexter, represents the 25th State Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and serves the state as the President Pro Tem of the State Senate.

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