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## Protecting Religious Freedom

APRIL 02ND 2012 BY UNKNOWN

### Protecting Religious Freedom

***By Rob Mayer***

One of our country's core principles found in the First Amendment is our freedom to exercise religion without government interference. Recent actions by the federal government have threatened this freedom and we have taken action to defend this fundamental right.

As part of the president's health care law, the federal government is mandating that employers offer to cover, through their health care plan, services such as abortions, contraception, and sterilization. This goes against many Missourians' religious or moral beliefs, yet, the federal government is still forcing the employer to cover those services.

This is why last week the Senate advanced Senate Bill 749. The bill prevents individuals, employers, or other entities from being compelled to obtain insurance coverage that is contrary to the individual, employer or other entities' religious beliefs or moral convictions. The legislation also prevents discrimination against or punishment for declining or refusing to provide coverage that is contrary to the person, employer or other entities' religious beliefs or moral convictions.

Passage of this legislation goes a long way in defending the rights of employees and employers in practicing their religious beliefs.

As the Senate worked to pass this important religious protection act last Tuesday, we were greeted by overwhelming support for Senate Bill 749. Thousands of Missourians came to

the Capitol and rallied for the protection of their religious freedoms. I am thankful for the many that stopped by my office and expressed the importance in defending our religious freedoms and moral beliefs. I believe their voice was heard and many of my colleagues took notice, passing Senate Bill 749 with bipartisan support.

There is still plenty of work to be done. This week, the Senate Appropriations Committee will begin the process of editing the state's \$24 billion budget. As the former chairman of the Appropriations Committee, I know the importance of transparency in the budget process so you have a clear understanding of how we are spending your hard earned tax dollars.

That is why I introduced and last week the Senate advanced unanimously Senate Bill 877 to require regular reports on the number of state employees. Under the legislation, each department would have to present quarterly to the Speaker of the House and the Senate President Pro Tem the number of full-time employees of the department by job classification or job description and the geographic location of state employees. The act also requires the report to indicate the number of vacancies over the past quarter and the number of such vacancies that were filled over that quarter.

There will be many tough decisions crafting a budget that lives within the taxpayers' means and protects our priorities. Senate Bill 877 provides greater and more accurate information to the budget process so we can ensure every dollar is spent efficiently and effectively.

*Rob Mayer of Dexter represents the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and is the Senate President Pro Tem.*

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## Continued Work On Job Creation

MARCH 28TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

Continued Work On Job Creation

*By Rob Mayer*

One of the Senate's top priorities this session is to help put Missourians back to work. We believe we can no longer continue to do business in our state using the same policies we have relied on and expect a different result. There are far too many Missourians without a job and it is important we improve Missouri's business environment so businesses can grow and hire more employees.

In an effort to ease the pain Missouri workers are going through, we worked quickly this session to pass Senate Bill 572 and House Bill 1219 to help employers put Missourians back to work in good-paying jobs with benefits.

SB 572 restored protections for co-employees from personal lawsuits for their role in honest accidents at work and ended lawsuit abuses. It is difficult for businesses to hire employees if they are going to need to spend money for additional insurance to cover these honest accidents. Passage of the bill rejected a 2010 appeals court decision that opened up co-employees to this risk. It also returned Workers' Compensation as the exclusive remedy for workplace accidents. This bill gave a level of certainty to the risk employers take when hiring employees.

HB 1219 simply harmonized our state employment law with federal Civil Rights Act. Missouri's employment law originally resembled federal law, but differences have surfaced through case law. Over the past few years, Missouri courts have drastically changed Missouri employment law so that it no longer matches federal law. Employers are slow to invest in jobs in Missouri when faced with different employment law

standards creating lawsuit abuses. Passage of HB 1219 made Missouri's standards meet the provisions set out in the historic Civil Rights Act, giving employers and workers more certainty.

Unfortunately, for as quick as we moved both bills to the governor's desk for signing, he just as quickly vetoed them. Had the governor signed SB 572 and HB 1219, businesses could spend less money on expansive legal fees and instead invest those dollars towards expanding their businesses, putting Missourians to work. Instead, because of the veto, business growth will continue to be strangled with the same failed policies these bills were aimed to fix.

Luckily for Missouri, the legislative session is not over and we will continue to work on the Senate's priority of putting people back to work. For businesses to grow or consider moving to Missouri, we must change both Missouri's employment law and Workers' Compensation system. There are a number of different options we will consider to do this, including a veto override or passage of new legislation the governor finds acceptable. We invite him to join us for discussions on passing legislation that put Missourians back to work.

*Rob Mayer of Dexter represents the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and is the Senate President Pro Tem.*

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# Providing Assistance To Storm Victims

MARCH 21ST 2012 BY UNKNOWN

## Providing Assistance To Storm Victims

*By Rob Mayer*

After a string of devastating storms rolled through the southern and northern portions of Missouri in late February, federal disaster aid was immediately requested to assist the 18 Missouri counties that were affected by this violent weather. To my shock and complete disappointment, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) denied Missouri's request to provide our state's residents with the help they need to get them back on their feet and return to a sense of normalcy during this chaotic time.

Stoddard County is one of the many counties currently working to pick up the pieces after these storms. As this county's voice in the Missouri Senate, I was disheartened to hear aid from FEMA would not be available to these citizens. With this federal aid, Missourians would have been eligible for grants to help with home repairs, temporary housing, replacing personal and household items, as well as crisis counseling and legal services. Citizens also need assistance with clearing and dispensing debris on the roads and private property throughout the affected areas.

While Missouri will continue to provide critical resources, aid and personnel to the affected comm After a string of devastating storms rolled through the southern and northern portions of Missouri in late February, federal disaster aid was immediately requested to assist the 18 Missouri counties that were affected by this violent weather. To my shock and complete disappointment, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) denied Missouri's request to provide our state's residents with the help they need to get them back on their feet and return to a sense of normalcy during this chaotic time.

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While Missouri will continue to provide critical resources, aid and personnel to the affected communities, residents whose homes, businesses and farmland were damaged and destroyed have been told they will not be eligible for much-needed federal grants. In addition, many Missourians' insurance does not cover the immediate assistance they need at this time. As if this mass destruction is not enough, a number of people were injured and an innocent soul lost his life in Stoddard County during the tornadic storm that ripped through my county.

Missouri is doing what it can to help its citizens – it was my hope that FEMA would have stepped up and provided our state's citizens with additional assistance and resources.

Assistance was recently made available to qualified homeowners, renters and businesses from the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) in the form of low-interest disaster loans. However, of the 14 counties eligible for SBA assistance, not one falls within the 25th District.

Missourians are resilient, but we all need a helping hand when life deals us circumstances such as the cards dealt to many of the citizens of the Show-Me State, including those who live within my district, on that stormy day in February.unities, residents whose homes, businesses and farmland were damaged and destroyed have been told they will not be eligible for much-needed federal grants. In addition, many Missourians' insurance does not cover the immediate assistance they need at this time. As if

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## Quick Action To Spur Job Creation

FEBRUARY 21ST 2012 BY UNKNOWN

[Quick Action To Spur Job Creation](#)







***By Rob Mayer***

Three weeks before the midway point of the 2012 Legislative Session, I am proud to report the Senate has advanced the three priority bills I outlined in my opening day speech to help improve Missouri's business climate. I appreciate my colleagues swift work that culminated with the Senate now passing and sending all three measures to the Missouri House for similar consideration.

It was important we move quickly because, unfortunately, joblessness remains high here in Missouri and across the nation. While Missouri's unemployment rate has improved, it is still too high as 8% or more than 245,000 citizens are still out of work. In fact, since January of 2008, Missouri has lost more than 90,000 jobs – that's equivalent to the population of Lee's Summit, Missouri's sixth largest city. The number of Missourians who want to work full-time, but have settled for part-time work, has doubled in the past two years and is now at 5% or more than 150,000. Plus, one of every six Missourians is currently receiving food stamps.

This is unacceptable. I believe we can no longer continue to do business in our state using the same policies we have relied on and expect things to change. That is why we proposed several ideas that are part of the equation to help employers put Missourians back to work in good-paying jobs with benefits.

The Senate's plan to improve Missouri's business climate started with the three priority bills we have already passed. They include [Senate Bill 469](#) that moves Missouri business owners a step closer to greater freedom from excessive and burdensome state rules and regulations, [Senate Bill 592](#) that would change state laws to mirror federal employment laws when it comes to discrimination bringing certainty to these laws, and [Senate Bill 572](#) that would restore protections for co-employees from personal lawsuits for their role in honest accidents at work and return Workers' Compensation as the exclusive remedy for workplace accidents.

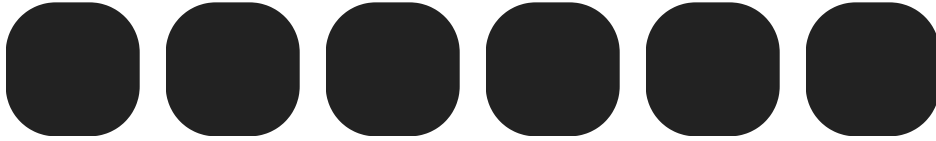
In the coming weeks, we will examine other legislation as part of a comprehensive package of bills aimed at helping spur job creation. Those include [Senate Bill 439](#) that would go a long way to making sure taxpayers aren't being fleeced when it comes to the rates they have to pay contractors on public building projects and [Senate Bill 438](#) that would establish worker protections so Missouri will no longer miss out on manufacturing opportunities.

The alarm is sounding, and we should all hear the wake-up call that now is the time to put these pieces in place so Missouri can truly compete for jobs. The bottom line is that our unwillingness to change is costing Missouri jobs. We want Missouri's businesses, big and small, to succeed and be able to create jobs. With these changes, I believe that reality is on the horizon.

*Rob Mayer of Dexter represents the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and is the Senate President Pro Tem.*

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## Senate Adopts Employment Law Changes

FEBRUARY 07TH 2012 BY UNKNOWN

### Senate Adopts Employment Law Changes

*By Rob Mayer*

Last week we set out to break a lengthy debate in order to advance a bill that would change state laws to mirror federal employment laws when it comes to discrimination. Just before 2 a.m. Thursday morning, the Senate perfected [Senate Bill 592](#) that would do just that.

The measure makes sure Missouri employees will be protected from employers who break the law by having our standards meet the provisions set out in the historic Civil Rights Act. This gives employers and workers better certainty across the board when it comes to their day in court.

The bill changes Missouri law to state that discrimination must be “a motivating factor” rather than “a contributing factor” in wrongful termination lawsuits, which is identical to language in the federal Civil Rights Act. It would also allow for summary judgments, allow any party to demand a jury trial, limit awards for certain damages as outlined in federal law, and exclude managers and supervisors from being held individually liable.

Missouri’s employment law originally resembled federal law, but unfortunately, Missouri courts have drastically changed Missouri employment law over the years. It’s important the people of Missouri, through their elected representatives, ultimately

shape our laws.

I believe this is an important step in helping put Missourians back to work. Missouri businesses tell us that by harmonizing our state employment law with federal employment law, they can invest more in hiring new employees rather than expansive legal fees to navigate a current system riddled with uncertainty.

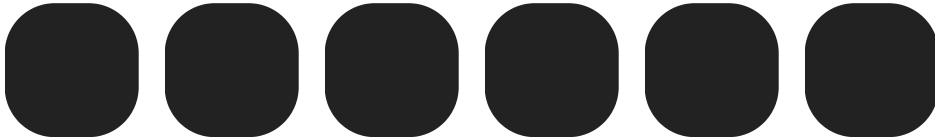
Also this week, the [Senate Governmental Accountability Committee](#) will hold another hearing on the failed Mamtek economic development project. After several hearings where the state economic development department was questioned about their role in marketing this poorly vetted project to Missouri communities, the committee will now hear from a national organization on the best practices in other states that could be applied to Missouri. I have charged the committee with recommending any legislative reforms they find necessary to prevent another failed economic development project of this size from happening again.

*Rob Mayer of Dexter represents the 25<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District in the Missouri State Senate and is the Senate President Pro Tem.*

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