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Providing a Pathway to Success for Missouri's Future

MAY 14TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Providing a Pathway to Success for Missouri's Future

In January of this year my office hosted the 2018 Southeast Missouri Education Forum at Three Rivers College in Poplar Bluff with over 40 K-12 schools represented by their Superintendents, Principals, and Board members. The theme of the forum was “are we teaching what our students need for the 21st century?”

Recently, the Missouri Senate gave final approval to legislation intended to attract high paying jobs to Missouri. Senate Bill 894/921, which I sponsored, incentivizes high school students to take computer science courses. Ensuring the passage of this career opportunity bill was one of my top priorities for the 2018 legislative session.

It requires new computer science standards to include coding and programming along with guidelines designed for K-12 schools. This will encourage more Missouri students to study computer science by allowing the course to count toward high school graduation. Polls indicate that 93% of Missouri parents want their children to be taught the computer science skills they need for the 21st Century job market. This knowledge is in high demand across our state and country. The bill also creates a certification program for computer science teachers as well as introduces an online program that showcases STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) careers and their impact on today’s economy.

It has been reported that more than 11,000 unfilled computer science jobs are available in our state, with an average salary of \$82,000, which is nearly double the current average salary in Missouri. Computing occupations are the number one source of all new wages in

the United States. Jobs in STEM related fields, especially those focusing on computer technology, are the driving force of growth and innovation throughout Missouri. I am pleased to see this legislation receive approval from the General Assembly, not only for the opportunities it presents for today's students, but for all Missourians. Senate Bill 894, received final approval and is now headed to the governor's desk for his signature. The legislation will go into effect on Aug. 28, 2018.

I welcome you to visit your State Capitol and stop by our office in room 219, or call (573) 751-4843 with any questions, concerns or comments you may have. I am honored to serve the citizens of the 25th Senatorial District.

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