



# Missouri Association for Social Welfare

## Legislative Update 2008



MAY 2, 2008

### MASW Priority: Health Access & Economic Justice Medicaid Cuts a Big Joke to Some Legislators

[Link Here for  
Part 2 of  
Last Week's  
Update \(4/25\)](#)

Those who hold the majority in the Missouri House of Representatives chose this week to use the misfortune of Missourians who do not have access to health care – a misfortune that these legislators themselves created – as the basis for a cruel political game, and had a good laugh on the House floor about it.

[Link here for audio  
highlights of the  
debate – note  
especially Rep.  
Oxford's remarks](#)

To understand the depths to which they sank, note the following. First, they brought to the House floor a House bill on the Perfection Calendar – with two weeks and one day left in this year's legislative session, there is not time for a bill to finally pass unless it has already cleared at least one chamber (a Senate bill being debated in the House, or a House bill being debated in the Senate). So those in power understood full well that this was about political theater, not actually making law.

Second, the bill – [HB 1644](#) sponsored by [Rep. Bob Onder](#) – would allow corporations to fully deduct the federal taxes they pay from their state tax computations, further eroding Missouri's already woefully inadequate ability to fund a social safety net and vital services for the common good. Not only is that another in a seemingly endless stream of bad ideas from these legislators, but knowing the subject of the bill adds to our understanding of the depravity of the farce that followed.

Third, when Rep's [Scott Muschany](#) and [Steve Hunter](#) offered their amendments dealing with personal income tax, they were attempting to change a different section of statute dealing with a different subject (corporate tax deduction versus personal income tax rates). The state constitution forbids adding subjects to a bill in the course of its passage beyond its purpose as introduced, so Muschany, Hunter and their colleagues in the majority knew that, even if this were passed through the House and Senate in the next two weeks – a virtually impossibility, as we noted above – the provision they were attempting to add would be thrown out by the courts.

Fourth, they offered an amendment they themselves have pledged to NEVER support, that is to increase the personal income tax rates; to offer an amendment in this context serves no purpose other than to attempt to make your political opponents look bad.

Fifth, the amendment used these words, "All additional revenues received as a result of the changes to the tax rates in subsection 3 of this section shall be dedicated, upon appropriation, to [restoring cuts in Medicaid funding](#)." In their remarks, the sponsors of this farce said it would "restore the Medicaid cuts," but it would not. Writing these words into statute would do no such thing. To accomplish that purpose, the language would have to refer to restoring eligibility to

***Salus Populi Suprema Lex Esto***

what it was on January 1, 2005, and the program is no longer called Medicaid, but rather MO Health Net, and the sponsors of this amendment KNOW that. And if these words in statute did mean anything, the courts would throw them out because they are a completely different section of the law than the original bill.

Sixth, the new tax code proposed would increase taxes in a regressive manner on middle income tax payers – hitting the middle income folks for a bigger relative increase than those who are better off.

Taken together, these six layers of Machiavellian claptrap attempted to put the legislative minority in a trick box – vote YES and increase taxes by \$300 million, mostly on the middle class; vote NO and make a lie of your commitment to restore the Medicaid cuts of 2005.

But several Representatives in the legislative minority, including [Jeanette Mott Oxford](#) and [J. C. Kuessner](#), called the majority's bluff. They pointed out that the amendment did NOT offer a true opportunity to restore the Medicaid cuts, but was instead a cruel political joke. They also noted that by calling back just a few of the multi-million dollar tax give-aways granted to some notable high-dollar campaign contributors, the state could restore the Medicaid cuts without raising the income tax rates.

In the end, after the amendment was defeated on a vote of 1 – 146, several of the leaders of this effort on the majority side were laughing and enjoying the stunt they had executed.

As someone who has been in the Capitol every legislative session for 22 years – including six years as a member of the House – this was the most shameful thing I have ever witnessed in the House of Representatives.

## **Insure Missouri No More**

The Conference Committee working on the differences between versions of the state's 2009 budget that have been adopted by the House and Senate, respectively, agreed this week to remove all funding for the Governor's proposed Insure Missouri program.

The Senate passed [SS SCS SB 1283](#), which, among many other changes in the state's health coverage system, would institute a version of something called Insure Missouri. In its present form, it would restore some Medicaid-like coverage to some people who lost coverage in the 2005 cuts, and MASW would examine it carefully to see if it would merit support based on doing more good than harm, and better than doing nothing.



This is all moot, however, in light of the decision by budget makers to eliminate the proposed \$350 million or so needed to pay for the program in 2009. It is not to say that this group of legislators will not hand out hundreds of millions of dollars in state money – they have done so this year, as in most years – but since those who have no health care if they do not have Medicaid are not commonly contributors of large amounts of money to political campaigns, they are not likely to be on the receiving end of the state's multi-million dollar largesse.

## MASW Priority: Social Justice

### Sen. Justus Gives Keynote Address

#### MASW Kansas City Chapter Annual Dinner

The [Kansas City Chapter](#) of MASW recognized several heroes in the struggle for social justice at its very successful Annual Dinner last night (May 1) at the Grace and Holy Trinity Cathedral Founder's Hall. First-term State Senator Jolie Justus, in only her second year representing Kansas City's 10<sup>th</sup> District, was honored with the chapter's Herman and Dorothy Johnson Award.



[Rep. Low](#)

Sen. Justus, who was also the keynote speaker for the event, was introduced by another young champion of the welfare of the people, KC-area State Representative Beth Low. Between them they have fought to advance an agenda that reflects MASW priorities, including tax justice, affordable housing, access to health and mental health services, and human rights.



[Sen. Justus](#)

#### Part 2 of Last Week's Update (April 25)

## MASW Priority: Human Rights

### Senator Scott Speaks Out

After the hearing on HCS HB's 1549 *et al* (see [last week's Update](#)) the Senate Committee on Pensions, Veterans' Affairs & General Laws prepared to vote on another anti-immigrant bill, [HCS#2 HB 1463](#), which seeks to bar Missouri high school graduates, whose parents brought them from their country of birth at a young age and have neither citizenship nor other immigration status, from attending a state college or university. That's when it happened...

Sen. Delbert Scott spoke on the bill. Sen. Scott is the "Dean of the General Assembly," which is to say he has the longest uninterrupted service of any current member; he was first elected to the House in a special election in 1985, where he served until being elected to the Senate in 2002. He is a self-described conservative and, as such, most observers – myself included – expected him to speak in favor of the bill and rail against "illegal aliens."

Other than Sen. Scott's voice, the only sounds heard in the hearing room were those of jaws dropping, as he eloquently opposed the bill and called for "turning down the heat" in the debate on this and related issues. Our anger, he said, should be directed, not at people who have come seeking a better life, as all of our forbearers have done, but at our elected officials in Washington who have failed in their responsibility to fix our broken national immigration system.

He quoted the inscription on the Statue of Liberty (as we did in our [April 10 Update](#)), and spoke movingly of his own visit to Ellis Island. He noted that America had always been a nation with open arms, and we must stay true to that heritage.

Unfortunately, the bill was voted "Do Pass" anyway.



[Sen. Scott](#)

## House Hearing on Anti-Immigrant Bill

Later that same day (4/23), the [House Special Committee on Immigration](#) heard the Senate omnibus “illegal immigration” bill, and MASW joined with several of our MIRA allies to testify against. We emphasized that legislation that forces local and state law enforcement and social services officials to screen for undocumented foreign nationals will inevitably lead to harassment of and discrimination against foreign-born American citizens and others who have legal permission from the federal government to be present in the USA.

The bill is [SS SCS SB's 858, 750, 751, 927, 1186, 1255, 168 & 1269](#). Also testifying AGAINST the bill were the Missouri Chambers of Commerce and other business associations.

## Help Save Affirmative Action!

The deadline to file signatures for initiative petitions is this weekend (Sunday, May 4), and the forces of discrimination are pulling out all the stops so they can put a deceptive anti-affirmative action measure on the November 2008 ballot in our state. If you can help defeat the anti-civil rights initiative, contact Lara at 314-644-0466 or Aaron at 314-497-8545 or Amy at 314-265-3927.

## MASW Priority: Your Participation

If you are not a member of MASW, [join us](#). ***There has never been a more important time to be involved in the cause of social justice and the common good.***

Share your passion for these issues, and take advantage of our statewide presence and involvement in state policymaking.

Contribute to our on-going advocacy for our state's motto, that the welfare of the people shall be the supreme law.