



MASW

Legislative Update 2009



February 27, 2009

MASW Priority: Quality Healthcare Medicaid Rally

Hundreds of concerned Missourians came to the their [State Capitol](#) on Wednesday to [agitate and advocate](#) for restoration of the Medicaid benefits that were taken away from tens of thousands of our most vulnerable families and individuals in 2005.

[Governor Jay Nixon](#) stated his strong support for overturning the 2005 Medicaid cuts during his campaign last year. In the meantime, the state and national economy have taken the worst nosedive since The Great Depression and government revenue to fully restore the cuts right now would be difficult to come by. But Nixon remains committed to the goal, and told the crowd at the rally that extending Medicaid coverage to the 35,000 additional workers and 27,000 children proposed in the budget he submitted to the legislature would be “the first step.”



Medicaid Rally in State Capitol 2/25
Photo credit: KOMU-TV

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Unfortunately, even as advocates were hearing these words, the [House Budget Committee](#) voted to cut the funding for more children from Nixon’s supplemental budget (which is for the remainder of the current fiscal year). On a vote of 14 – 11, they cut a little less than one million in state money; but federal funds would pay more than 80%, which means they are **sending five-and-a-half million dollars back to Washington!**

[Rep. Allen Icet](#), Chair of the Budget Committee, has stated on many occasions that he considers the 2005 Medicaid Cuts the crowning achievement of the Blunt Administration.

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But does he really believe (along with a majority of the committee) it is good service to the taxpayers of Missouri to demand that \$5.5 million Missourians have paid in federal taxes be used to provide health care in California or New Jersey instead of providing health care in Missouri?

The rally was organized by Rich Blakely at [Disabled Citizens Alliance for Independence](#) (DCAI) and Robin Acree at [GRO-Grass Roots Organizing of Missouri](#). [MASW](#) was proud to join with the [Missouri Nurses Association](#), [AFSCME](#), [SEUI](#) and many other groups that participated.

You can view some of the media coverage of the rally and the Medicaid issue to which it drew attention by clicking on the links for the various news outlets: [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#); [KOMU-TV](#); [KSHB-TV](#); [FOX4-TV\(KC\)](#); [KOLR-TV](#); and [Forbes.com](#) (which is the AP story).

Medicaid expert Joel Ferber of [Legal Services of Eastern Missouri](#) notes in his [analysis](#) of the recently enacted Federal Stimulus Package, "Missouri's share of FMAP increase is estimated to be \$1.6 billion over the 27- month period from October 1, 2008 through December 31, 2010."

FMAP: Federal Medical Assistance Percentage. "One of the key features of the economic stimulus bill is fiscal relief directly tied to expenditures on State Medicaid programs, including Missouri's *MO-HealthNet*. The legislation provides for a temporary increase in the federal percentage of State Medicaid payments, making it easier for states to meet the increased demand for Medicaid and CHIP (the health program for children) coverage which results from increasing unemployment at a time when state revenues are declining," says Ferber.

Click on the link (the word "analysis") above or [here](#) to read Ferber's complete report.

MASW Priority: The Next Generation Student Advocacy Day

More than 250 students from colleges across Missouri came to Jefferson City on Tuesday (2/24) as participants in MASW's Annual Student Advocacy Day.

Students have been researching legislative issues and the legislative process, and MASW is able to assist with a hands-on experience in the legislative process.



[More Pictures – Click Here](#)

MASW staff and other experts shared tips on successfully interacting with legislators, then briefed and updated students on three legislative issues: a [moratorium on the death penalty](#); lifting the [lifetime ban for food stamp](#) eligibility on Missourians who have a felony drug conviction; and increasing revenue for the [Missouri Housing Trust Fund](#).

Higher Education Institutions with faculty and students in attendance were [St. Louis University](#), [Washington University](#) in St. Louis, [University of Missouri at St. Louis](#), [University of Missouri at Columbia](#), [University of Central Missouri](#), [Lindenwood University](#), [William Woods University](#), [Lincoln University](#), [Southeast Missouri State University](#), [Missouri State University](#) in Springfield, and [University of Missouri at Kansas City](#).

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MASW Priorities: Asset Development & Economic Justice

EITC Bill

Always a fervent advocate for the downtrodden and dispossessed, [Sen. Jolie Justus](#) presented [SB 105](#) before the Senate Committee on Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight on Thursday. The bill would create a state version of the very successful federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).



EITC, which Ronald Reagan once called “the best anti-poverty program” the government had ever developed, is a credit subtracted from income taxes owed for people who are working but have lower wages. It is a refundable credit, so that if the credit you are entitled to based on family size and other factors exceeds what had been withheld from your wages, you would still get the credit as a refund.

Under Sen. Justus’s bill, your state EITC would simply be 20% of your federal EITC. MASW was proud to join the [Missouri Budget Project](#), [AARP](#) and the [Partnership for Children](#) in testifying in favor of the bill. We would prefer to see the state EITC implemented as part of a more [comprehensive overhaul](#) of our state income tax system, which would also increase what would be paid by those at the highest income levels.

More Corporate Giveaways

[HB 86](#), sponsored by [Rep. Mike Sutherland](#), is the latest in a series of tax giveaways to corporate interests to be passed by the Missouri House of Representatives. At a time when the state is hundreds of millions of dollars short of what is needed to provide an adequate social safety net and array of vital public services, this bill reduces the corporate tax “burden” in this state by \$10 - \$12 million annually.



The bill’s sponsors claim this sort of tax policy will make Missouri a magnet for businesses to locate and expand. But several Representatives, led by Assistant Minority Leader (and small businessperson) [J. C. Kuessner](#), noted that our state already ranks in the bottom dozen or so for corporate tax “burden,” yet we lag badly in attracting and retaining businesses, compared even to states with higher corporate taxes.



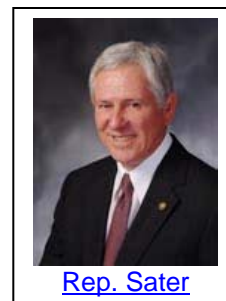
Standing up to the corporate interests, and standing up for the common good and the welfare of the people, these 24 Representatives voted NO on HB 86: Bert Atkins, Rachel Bringer, John Burnett, Mike Colona, Mike Frame, Jacob Hummel, J. C. Kuessner, Paul LeVota, Beth Low, Rebecca McClanahan, Tom McDonald, James Morris, Charlie Norr, Jeanette Oxford, Sharon Pace, Paul Quinn, Jeff Roorda, Trent Skaggs, Mary Still, Mike Talboy, Tom Todd, Michael Vogt, Rochelle Walton-Gray and Chris Kelly (who was off the floor on other business when the final was taken, but voted NO on first-round approval).

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Further Restrictions on TANF

The [Children and Families Committee](#) of the Missouri House held its weekly hearing Wednesday, and HB 42 was first on the agenda.

[HB 42](#), sponsored by [Rep. David Sater](#), would require the state to seek a waiver from the federal government so that Missouri can further reduce its obligation to assist those in dire need for the necessities of life. The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program already has a lifetime participation limit of five years; HB 42 would reduce that to two years.



At a time when the unemployment rate is soaring, the bill would tighten the requirements that to receive TANF payments a person must be employed, with fewer exceptions. And, once the monthly benefit amount is calculated based on the number of children in the family, HB 42 would not allow the benefit to increase if another child comes into the family...



Except **“in cases involving the birth of an additional child in a family when the mother is the victim of rape or incest.”** [Section 208.038(3) of the bill]. This provision prompted the committee chair, [Rep. Cynthia Davis](#), to ask, “What happens when 100% of the babies born to women on TANF are reported as rape or incest?”

I’m not making this up.

MASW testified against this bill, citing many of the same facts as the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* used in its [front-page article](#) the next day (written by Adam Jadhav; click on the link to read the whole story). The number of Missourians receiving food stamps, Medicaid benefits, TANF and so on increases every month.

In that article, the *Post* noted the position of MASW: *All of those indicators are expected to increase as the economy continues to falter, said Bob Quinn, executive director of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare. “The time comes when you’ve gone through all your savings, you’ve borrowed as much money as you can, you’re out of work and you need help,” Quinn said. “That’s what we’re seeing now.”*

You can use [this link](#) to get contact information for your legislator and express your opinion of HB 42.

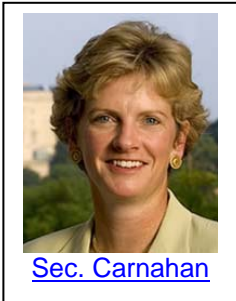
MASW Sets Date for 109th Annual Conference Friday, November 6 in St. Louis

Tools for Change: Awareness, Advocacy and Action is the theme for our 109th Annual Conference, a special one-day event set for Friday, November 6 at the University of Missouri – St. Louis. Details will be coming soon, so check [our website](#).

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MASW Priority: Fair Treatment Making It Harder to Vote

[HJR 9](#), sponsored by [Rep. Stanley Cox](#), would, if adopted by the voters, weaken the protection of the right to vote. Ironic. Tragic. Advocates of smaller, more limited government want to give the government the power to dictate that you must have government-approved photo identification in order to exercise your right to vote.

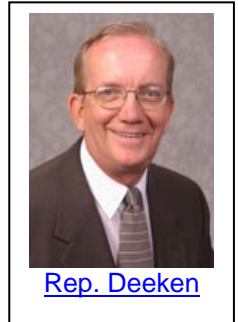


In testimony this week before the House Committee on Elections, Rich Lamb of the office of Secretary of State [Robin Carnahan](#) testified that more than 200,000 legally eligible and registered voters in Missouri do not have a state driver's license or other government-issued photo identification.

MASW opposes this measure because empowering people to participate in their government and shape public policy is part of our core mission dating back to our founding 109 years ago. Making it harder for people to vote – especially people who are elderly, disabled, impoverished or otherwise not in possession of a driver's license nor the fiscal and other resources needed to get all the prerequisite documents – is a policy MASW must oppose.



On a personal note, there was a bit of déjà vu to testify before the Elections Committee chaired by [Rep. Bill Deeken](#). This is the same committee I chaired when I was a member of the House not quite 20 years ago, and Bill Deeken at that time was County Clerk of Cole County and often appeared as witness before the committee.



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