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**Committees**

Agriculture Policy  
Appropriations-Transportation and Economic  
Development  
Conservation & Natural Resources

**TOM LOEHNER**  
**State Representative**  
**District 112**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Hello from the capitol.

As I write this week's capitol report we have severe weather and flash flood warnings on the television and radio. It seems like just yesterday we had ice and winter storm warnings. Personally I don't know what is worse, ice or the mud.

Having committee hearings early every morning this week sure made feeding at 5:00 a.m. very interesting. Just yesterday what I thought was one of the barn cats following me down to feed turned out to be Pepe` Le Pew, the lovesick skunk! Life is always interesting on the farm.

As everyone knows, access to affordable healthcare is a huge issue. We are working to expand Missourians' access to care and must have the flexibility to ensure we can provide our children the health coverage they need.

The state and federally funded State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is designed to provide aide to uninsured working families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid. In Missouri, the program provides coverage for more than 66,000 children. Missouri is one of only eight states that provide coverage for children up to 300 percent of the federal poverty level through the SCHIP. The governor's proposed changes through MO HealthNet would expand the program to an estimated additional 6,349 children.

Relating to health insurance, Representative Doug Ervin has filed House Bill 818 which is a significant step forward as we work to create a comprehensive program to expand access to quality health insurance and reduce the number of Missourians who lack coverage.

Rep. Ervin's legislation includes the following provisions:

- Allows the uninsured and all Missourians to pay insurance premiums with tax free dollars just like big companies can now.

- Eases the administrative burdens of small businesses who want to help their employees pay for healthcare.
- Improves our laws so that Missourians can take their insurance with them if they switch jobs.
- Increases competition between insurance plans to make healthcare more affordable for Missourians.
- Provides increased healthcare choices for Missourians.

The Missouri House of Representatives has passed legislation this week that will encourage Missourians to purchase long-term healthcare insurance. House Bill 40 increases the amount Missouri residents can deduct from their taxable income for paying for long-term care insurance premiums. Currently, you can deduct 50% of your long-term healthcare insurance. The new legislation will allow you to deduct 100%, the entire amount you pay for a long-term care insurance premium from your taxable income. This will help Missourians reduce their tax burden and keep more of their hard-earned money in their pockets. It also gives those receiving long-term care a measure of dignity because they can direct their care, rather than having to go just to facilities that accept Medicaid.

On Wednesday we had six of our 112<sup>th</sup> District's Parents as Teachers visit the capitol. They explained their needs for the upcoming year and what they have accomplished in the past. If you are not familiar with PAT it is focused on pre-school child evaluation and to recognize children who have special needs. It is very important that these children are identified before they enter elementary school.

The Parents as Teachers program was started in Missouri and has been a model for programs throughout the country and internationally. The program has helped parents understand their role in encouraging their child's development and preparing them for success in school.

As always, it is an honor and pleasure to serve as your state representative.