

CAPITOL OFFICE

State Capitol – Room 403B
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City MO 65101-6806
Tele: 573-751-1344
Fax: 573-526-7739
E-Mail: tom.loehner@house.mo.gov

HOME ADDRESS

632 Loehner Ln.
Koeltztown MO 65048
Tele: 573-744-5516

Committees

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

TOM LOEHNER
State Representative
District 112

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For more information please contact Representative Tom Loehner at 573-751-1344

Hello from the capitol!

The trees are finally starting to rebud. Our hay fields and pastures really got a boost with the rain. I am still very concerned about how much hay we are going to have. I have decided to substitute about 10 acres of corn for Sudan grass just to make sure we have enough hay for next winter.

The Senate recently took up Senate Bill 430 that includes removing loss limits on gambling boats.

This act repeals the maximum loss limit of five hundred dollars per individual player per gambling excursion and institutes a cap of thirteen licenses to operate excursion gambling boats in the state.

SB 430 establishes the Smart Start Scholarship Program. The program will offer grants for educational expenses incurred while attending a qualifying institution for no more than two academic years to each person who attends a Missouri high school for three consecutive academic years immediately prior to being graduated from the institution, and who, within two calendar years from the date of graduation, applies for a grant under this act.

After a couple of filibusters they finally passed SB 430 with a vote count of 17-16.

In the House Agriculture Policy Committee we heard SB 428 which deals with the National Animal Identification System. This act authorizes the Department of Agriculture to validate or certify procedures used by private source verification programs.

The act prohibits the state of Missouri from participating in the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) or any other similar source verification program without the approval of the General Assembly, with the exception of the current cattle-specific state source verification program. It also prohibits programs that are similar to any component of the NAIS, including premises registration, animal identification, or animal movement tracing.

The act renders null and void any existing cooperative agreements between Missouri and the federal government or other states that are related to any component or similar component of the NAIS.

The act does not prohibit Missouri from participating in certain disease control programs, brand registration or inspection programs, and does not prohibit private organizations from establishing source verification programs provided they are operated under certain conditions which include disclosure requirements, allowing persons to withdraw and remove their data, and utilizing no public funding.

This is a very controversial piece of legislation and both sides of the issue have legitimate concerns. I don't believe anyone wants a mandatory animal identification system but we also want to have a voluntary system that will allow a producer, if they so choose, to add value to their animals and not be locked out of certain markets because of lack of identification. We will be working hard to come up with a language that will satisfy both positions.

On House floor action we passed House Bill 647. This bill allows a person who owns, controls, or harbors a dog that is maintained on a leash at all times to use the dog to track a deer that has been shot by a person engaged in lawful hunting.

We passed SB 308 to which our Nurses Loan Repayment program bill was amended. This bill would revise the definition of "qualified employment" as it applies to the professional and practical nursing student loan program to include any agency, institution, or organization located in an area of need as determined by the Department of Health and Senior Services.

The House also took up and passed HB 215. Currently, relating to juvenile courts, an "adult" is defined as a person 17 years of age or older and a "child" is defined as an individual younger than 17 years of age. This bill changes the age to 18 in both definitions.

The House passed HB 1055 which establishes the Missouri Alternatives to Abortion Services program to provide services or counseling to pregnant women and assistance to women in caring for their children or placing them up for adoption. Counseling and services are available to a woman during her pregnancy and for one year after the birth of her child. The department or departments administering the programs may contract with public or private agencies to provide services or counseling.

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