



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Legislatures Sends Bill Rewriting Missouri's
Public School Funding Formula to the Governor**

JEFFERSON CITY – A new funding formula that distributes state money to public schools based on students' needs rather than local wealth is one step away from becoming law thanks to legislation sponsored by Sen. Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph. Shields authored the bill and noted the measure's focus of basing funding on students' needs rather than local property tax assessments.

"This formula puts Missouri's children at the heart of the issue," Shields said. "The sole responsibility of a formula is to fund education equitably and adequately and basing it on the needs of the students gives us the groundwork for adding money to a fair system."

The new formula begins with a school district's average daily attendance and then calculates additional credits for each student beyond the state average percentage enrolled in special programs within that district. Some of the student needs that are included in the calculation for extra credits include students that qualify for free or discount lunch programs, students enrolled in special education, and students with low English proficiency.

Once those credits are added to the average daily attendance of the district, that total is multiplied by the proposed state minimum spending amount per student which is \$6,117.

The measure also includes provisions that balance the needs of both urban and rural school districts. One new facet is known as the dollar value modifier. It takes into consideration the cost of living in each school district and adjusts a district's total amount by how much education a dollar can buy in various regions of the state. There is no cap on the amount the dollar value modifier can add to a district's total funding.

The formula also sets aside \$15 million for school districts that have less than 350 students in their average daily attendance. These traditionally rural, smaller school districts can use these funds for purposes such as distance learning, extraordinary transportation costs and rural teacher recruitment.

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Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, expressed the importance of fixing the state's school funding formula from the onset of this year's legislative session.

"It's clear that the current school funding formula is broken and we had to fix it," Gibbons said. "We found the right balance so that all of our children, no matter their public school district, now have an equal opportunity for a great education."

Shields echoed the importance of the legislature passing a new formula this year rather than leaving it to the courts to decide in reference to a pending lawsuit questioning the adequacy of the current formula.

"Parents, teachers, and superintendents have all had input in shaping the new formula through their elected officials," Shields said. "We are reactive to our constituency unlike the court judges who are not elected."

Shields said it is estimated that it will cost the state approximately \$800 million to fund the state's portion of the new formula. The bill calls for the funding increases to be phased in over the course of the next seven fiscal years, beginning in 2007.

The measure now moves to the governor's desk to await his signature.

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