

David Day

State Representative
District 148

DISTRICT ADDRESS

Po Box M
Dixon, MO 65459

**CAPITOL OFFICE**

Room 234 • State Capitol
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101-6806
Tele: (573) 751-1446
Fax: (573) 526-0761
david.day@house.mo.gov
Legislative Asst. Angie Thessen
angie.thessen@house.mo.gov

**MISSOURI
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

April 15, 2008

To: Teachers & Administrators in the 148th District
From: Rep. David Day
Subject: School Tax Credits for Children in Failing Schools

I am writing you today to inform you first of a decision I have made after much consideration and frankly many heart-wrenching conversations concerning the school tax credits that have recently been discussed in the state capitol, better know last session as HB 808.

As I have discussed with many of you in the past, this bill does not have any impact on any school in the 148th district, it is targeted only for the failing schools that are mostly in the urban areas which have been failing for a number of years. I assure you that if it is changed to include ANY schools in my district I will oppose it. A few of the provisions in this bill that you might be interested in are:

- Tax credits are made available to individuals or companies that contribute to a fund that will provide grants for certain students allowing them to attend a school that is not failing.
- No tax dollars will be taken from the education budget. Those that say these are education dollars that are being used to provide the tax credits must be willing to say that ALL tax dollars are education dollars, which we all know they are not. Tax credits are available for everything from hybrid cars and food pantries to cattle in Missouri.
- No student qualifies to leave a failing school unless their GPA is 2.5 or LOWER.
- If a student leaves a failing school under the tax credit program, the school will continue to receive 100% of the funding for that child, meaning the school will lose NO funding.
- Students receiving this grant MUST first apply to another public school for admittance, only if they are turned down by that public school can they apply to a private school

These are just a few of the provisions of the bill but are the ones that are most argued. Early in the discussion of these types of tax credits it was often said that only the smart kids will transfer or that the schools would go broke when all of the children left. Those statements are simply not true.

I have made the hard decision to support such a bill should it be introduced this session in the House. I say a hard decision not because of the content of the bill but because I know how

COMMITTEES

Chairman – Committee on Veterans Affairs
Vice Chairman – Committee on State Parks and Waterways
Special Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing
Special Committee on General Laws

most of you feel about the issue and my tremendous respect for you. I think most of you have known since you have known me that personally I feel it is something that needs to be done.

While there is no way that I can tell you this will fix the problem of these failing schools, what I think we can all agree on is what has been done in the past has not worked. For the future of these children, and since history tells us past actions have not worked, we must think outside of the box and look for new ways to save these children. We cannot be discussing this 10 years from now, it must be addressed.

Children graduating from these schools often cannot function in society because of a lack of skills and education. The rate of incarceration for children in these schools is much higher than any other area or school, because of their inability to earn a living. Not only are these children being done a huge disservice, it is costing tax payers millions of dollars to incarcerate these individuals.

This breakdown in the education system in these areas is no one person's or group's fault. I don't want to point the finger of blame to anyone, but if we were to do that I am sure there is plenty of blame to go around to teachers, administrators, communities, parents and yes even students. I know there are many wonderful people in each of these groups, but as a whole the system is not working as it is everywhere else in the state.

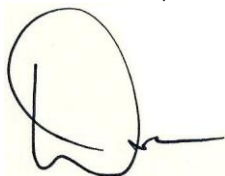
What I feel this bill will do is allow the lower achieving students to attend a place of education where they can get more personalized attention. It will then allow the higher achieving students to remain in the school, smaller class sizes and hopefully raise the scores and standards of the school. Hopefully, if parents start seeing their children starting to succeed, they will start taking more of a role in the education of their sons and daughters.

Again, this is not an easy decision at all, not because of my personal beliefs but because of my respect for you. I just simply cannot continue to vote against trying something new when every year more children graduate that are going into a situation where they will not succeed. I cannot push that "no" button again knowing I am helping doom these children to a life of failure, I don't want to be a part of the problem. I think you would agree, if your child were forced to attend one of these schools you would be crying for help, I know I would. Parents of these children have contacted me and we have visited, please trust me, they are crying for help for their children. They do not have the personal assets to do it by themselves and they are pleading for our help. These are the parents that do care and just don't have the ability to do it by themselves.

You know I will continue to fight for education and the continued increase of funding for it. I wanted to send you this before I visited with anyone else, so you heard it from me and not through the "grapevine". While I don't expect you to agree with this decision, I hope you can understand it. Please contact me if I can answer any questions or ever be of assistance.

I am including a fact sheet about the potential legislation that I believe includes many of the safeguards some of you have visited with me about.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Day", with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Day
State Representative
148th District