



Missouri House of Representatives

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CONTACT: Rep. Donna Lichtenegger
(573) 751-6662

Efforts of State Rep. Donna Lichtenegger's Oral Health Issue Development Committee Help Push for Hiring of State Dental Director

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – The state of Missouri will once again have a State Dental Director to oversee the dental needs and oral health of Missouri citizens. State Rep. Donna Lichtenegger applauded the Department of Health and Senior Services today as it announced the hiring of Dr. Ray Storm for the position that has been vacant since 2003.

The hiring of Dr. Storm to the position is due in large part to the efforts of Lichtenegger and the members of the Missouri House Oral Health Issue Development Committee. Lichtenegger's committee worked with the Missouri Coalition for Oral Health, Missouri Dental Association and the Missouri Foundation for Health to bring the need for a dental director to the attention of the members of the General Assembly.

In addition, Lichtenegger filed HB 613 during the 2013 regular session to create the Missouri Oral Health Program to increase awareness of the importance of oral health. While the bill did not make its way through the legislative process into law, Lichtenegger said it played an important role in creating a productive dialogue on this pressing public health issue.

"I have been getting the word out for more than a year about the importance of a State Dental Director and the need for an increased focus on promoting and encouraging good oral health for all Missourians," said Lichtenegger, R-Cape Girardeau. "Good oral health contributes significantly to overall positive health outcomes and it is time that our state put an emphasis on providing better access to dental care for all Missourians."

Lichtenegger, who worked as a dental hygienist for nearly 40 years, noted that a recent Pew study found that 63 percent of Medicaid-enrolled children in Missouri did not receive dental care in 2011. The same study also found that only 11 percent of dentists participate in the Medicaid program. Lichtenegger said both numbers indicate that more needs to be done to promote good oral health in the state.

Lichtenegger also pointed out that the new dental director position will be paid for through contributions made by a number of organizations who have supported the efforts to promote oral health in Missouri. She said the groups will continue to provide financial support for the position until federal dollars can be secured.

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