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age directly from Adam all the way to Muhammad. Just as other religions encourage scholarship, Muslims agree that "knowledge is power" as they read, study and read even more from holy texts. In capturing the unity between religions, Washington said, "God hasn't changed His faith. Religion is guidance, received from God."

Question #2: What aspects of Islam are distinctly different from other religions?

Ishmael is recognized as a major prophet at patriarch of Islam, with the realization that he was the first-born of Abraham, by his second wife Hagar. On the tenth day of the last month of the Islamic year, Qurbani Id or the "Sacrifice Festival" is observed, honoring Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Ishmael. This is a major issue of debate between Muslims and Jews, who hold that Abraham offered Isaac for sacrifice, not Ishmael. The holy book of Qur'an asserts Ishmael's sacrificial role, in contrast the Bible's references to Isaac. Ramadhan showed me his copy of the Qur'an, which is an English translation by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, who lived from 1872 to 1953. This edition is the most widely read of the English translations and was completed after three years in India in 1937. When expressing his concerns about misrepresentations of Islam around the world, Ramadhan powerfully told me that, "Satan is using seeds of dissension to create hatred. Satan is very busy, as he promised he would be."

Question #3: Describe some of the daily rituals of your religion for our readers.

Early every morning, we read from the Qur'an. We go into a state of prayer, in units called rakats, which including both standing and bowing toward Mecca, which is the cradle of civilization. Mecca is the scene of paradise, within which God placed Adam and Eve. All Muslims are constantly aware of the five pillars of their religion, which also include: Iman (belief), chastity, fasting and pilgrimage. Within the belief system of Iman are these foundations: God's oneness, God's books, the Prophets, the Angels, Life After Death, Faith--God Is the Cause of Everything, and the Judgment To Come.

Question #4: Since the open houses on February 5th and 6th last year, what support have you received from northwest Missouri?

We have experienced tremendous support since those open houses. Our local government entities have continued to be cooperative, just as they were in the planning and zoning

aspects of the mosque's construction. There has been some good dialog, as we spoke to the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, during a Sunday school sessions. Ramadhan himself addressed the Women's Democratic Club at one of that group's monthly luncheons in 2011. At the request of Saint Francis Xavier Roman Catholic Church, Islamic members participated in a Taize worship service on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of 9-11-2001. In addition, local Muslims have been part of an event at Wyatt Park Baptist Church. During the week of our meeting, the Islamic Cultural Center hosted members of the Saint Joseph YWCA. Washington is visibly heartened by the welcoming the mosque and its members continue to receive, as the mosque's first anniversary draws near.

Question #5: How does the Islamic Society manage the maintenance of the Saint Joseph mosque, which must stay in impeccably pristine condition?

The society has been exceedingly pleased with the efforts of Charles Triplett, who has been in charge of maintenance since the very beginning. Charles does an amazing job of handling all aspects of the upkeep. Readers must note that one of the convictions of Islam involved purification before every prayer. This process, called Wd'u, is an ablution involving water and is conducted by each Muslim as he or she prepares for Jumuah on Fridays or for Musalla on other days. Besides the prayer time, there are some social events in the mosque building--dinners have been enjoyed, which also require the service of Mr. Triplett in setting up and cleaning the property afterward. Indeed, "cleanliness is next to Godliness"!

There were some other important thoughts and recommendations which came from our hour in each other's company. Ramadhan encourages people to read The Muslim Journal, which is edited from Chicago, Illinois. A further way to learn more about the Islamic faith is to visit a well-written website at www.islam.org. There is a virtual encyclopedia of Muslim life and tradition available on that website. On January 27, 2012, the Islamic Society of Greater Saint Joseph will convene to elect officers by secret ballot. Among the officers will be President, Vice President, Secretary, Vice-Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-Treasurer. Toward the end of our dialogue, Ramadhan reflected his ongoing convictions in this way: "My goal is to bring the religions together. God is one, and we should be one, even with our minor differences." Let every one of us ponder those words in our hearts.

Committees Consider Senate Bills, State Budget

The Second Regular Session of the 96th General Assembly is in full swing, with legislative committees considering bills and other important state matters. These committees are vital in determining a measure's status, as bills cannot move further throughout the legislative process without receiving a stamp of approval from legislative panel members first.

I'm proud to serve on numerous committees, including the Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families Committee, of which I am vice chair. I also serve on the:

- * Appropriations Committee
- * General Laws Committee
- * Gubernatorial Appointments Committee
- * Progress and Development Comm.

Another committee I am honored to be a member of is the Senate Interim Committee on Health Insurance Exchanges. This committee has the very important task of researching Missouri's options on the establishment of a health insurance exchange and to study its effect on existing state laws.

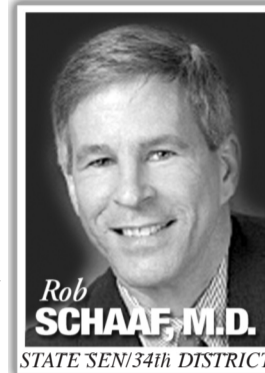
While serving on this panel, I was even more motivated to file one of my most essential measures for the 2012 legislative session -- SB 464. My bill would prohibit the creation of a state health insurance exchange, unless the Legislature or an act of the people, such as an initiative petition or referendum, created it. The bill clearly prohibits the governor from establishing an exchange by executive order.

I'm very pleased to say that my bill was voted out of the Senate Small Business, Insurance and Industry Committee on Tuesday, Jan. 17. With this passing vote, committee members recommend that SB 464 move to the full Senate for debate.

My Newly Introduced Legislation

I was happy to bring several new bills forward in the Missouri Senate -- many of my measures strive to reform and revamp our health care industry.

- Senate Bill 617 would require the Missouri Department of Social Services to clarify rules that specify the eligibility process for the MO HealthNet Spenddown Program. This program highlights the amount you must pay or reach each month before you can have MO HealthNet coverage (similar to an insurance premium). My bill contains an emergency clause, meaning this matter must be addressed immediately. Eligibility requirements for this program need to be more clearly defined.
- Senate Bill 618 would require auctioneers who sell real estate to be licensed by the Real Estate Commission. This bill would certify that Missouri real estate agents are conducting business fairly.
- Senate Bill 639 specifies that the act of a mother breastfeeding her child would not be considered an act of sexual conduct or public indecency, and would designate other protections for nursing mothers.



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STATE SEN/34th DISTRICT

- Senate Bill 640 would modify the Certificate of Need (CON) Program and amend the Health Facilities Review Committee. Some of the revisions to the CON law would include raising the expenditure minimum for falling under CON review for capital expenditures to \$1 million and for major medical equipment to \$2 million, and requiring all testimony and other evidence gathered during hearings to be under oath and subject to penalty of perjury.

- Senate Bill 674 would require insured Missourians to only pay the customary retail price of a prescription drug where the retail price is less than the applicable co-payment. For instance, if you visit a drug store and a product falls under a \$20 co-payment with your insurance plan, but that same product costs \$10 regular price, you would only pay \$10. The

bottom line is that insurance is designed to save you money -- not cost you more.

- Senate Bill 678 would require hospitals, ambulatory surgical centers, and long-term care facilities to report all "serious reportable events in health care," as identified by the National Quality Forum. These events include wrong-site surgery, retention of a foreign object in a patient after surgery, and death or serious disability associated with medication error.

- Senate Bill 686 would prohibit the resale or lease of returned electronic devices and appliances, unless subsequent customers are notified. The notification must be provided in both oral and written format and must disclose the reason for the product's return, as well as the nature of any repair work performed on the product since its return. A violation of the act would be considered an unlawful merchandising practice.

Passing a Balanced Budget for FY 2013

On Tuesday, Jan. 17, the governor issued his State of State Address. I was happy to hear that there are no tax increases in the governor's plan and that K-12 education funding is stable.

With the difficult economic conditions we are weathering, balancing the Fiscal Year 2013 budget is not an easy task, and cuts, although difficult, are necessary. I'm committed to doing my part in ensuring that reductions to higher education and social services still allow these departments to provide valuable services and programs for our state's citizens.

Legislative Forum for the 34th Senatorial District

On Friday, Jan. 27, I will proudly host a legislative forum for our area from 7:00-8:30 p.m. at the Platte County Administration Building (2nd Floor) 415 3rd St., Platte City.

Throughout the 2012 legislative session, I will be hosting a series of forums in our area so you have the opportunity to share your opinions and concerns with me regarding your government and community. There is absolutely no cost to attend the forums. I hope to see you and your neighbors there!

As always, thank you for your input and support as I serve the 34th Senatorial District. Please be sure to visit my Missouri Senate website at www.senate.mo.gov/schaaf to keep up with the status of my legislation, view my news releases, and check out legislative forums scheduled for our area. Thank you and God Bless.

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