

Another Election and Yard Sign Theft Continues

This Year, Victims Have Additional Recourse

JEFFERSON CITY – Legislation drafted by Senator John Loudon, R-Ballwin, and placed into law last year is helping enhance the integrity of Missouri’s election environment. Loudon’s measure makes stealing or defacing campaign yard signs a criminal offense and was incorporated into an omnibus bill placing Missouri in compliance with the federal Help Americans Vote Act of 2002.

“Tampering with a candidate’s yard sign is akin to tampering with an election and by extension stifles the constitutional right to freedom of speech,” Loudon said. “I felt it was time to make clear that any level of campaign interference is a crime against democracy and deserves the punishment of law.”

Videotaped instances of a candidate removing an opponent’s yard sign in the Wildwood area last year spurred Loudon to action.

“The same type of tampering has occurred this year in Hazelwood and similar allegations surfaced in Manchester running up to this month’s elections,” Loudon said. “Now, these reckless acts can be prosecuted – a judicial action serving as a strong deterrent to tampering with yard signs in future election cycles.”

Thanks to Loudon’s initiative, Missouri law now makes the willful defacing, mutilating, destroying or stealing of a campaign yard sign a class four election offense, which is a misdemeanor crime punishable upon conviction of up to a year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine.

Loudon notes that his speech-protecting measure applies only to campaign signs on private property placed with the property owner’s permission and in no way prohibits property owners from moving or removing signs placed in their yards.

“This legislation is aimed squarely at candidates or candidate supporters unwilling or unable to play by the rules,” Loudon said. “It discourages tampering with an opponent’s ability

to get his or her message out and encourages candidates to focus on their own campaigns. This is about protecting political speech.”