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**SEN. ANITA YECKEL AND REP. BRIAN BAKER JOIN
SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS TO URGE
PASSAGE OF SMALL BUSINESS LEGISLATION**

JEFFERSON CITY -- Joined by small business owners from throughout Missouri, Sen. Anita Yeckel, R-St. Louis, and Rep. Brian Baker, R-Belton, held a joint press conference today to discuss the need to pass legislation that would make it less cumbersome to operate a small business. Yeckel and Baker have each sponsored legislation that would create a Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board.

Under Senate Bill 718 and House Bill 978, the Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board would conduct hearings and solicit input from small businesses regarding enforcement by regulatory state agencies.

The board would be made up of two members appointed by the governor, one member appointed by the lieutenant governor, one member who is chair of the minority business advocacy commission, two members appointed by the House of Representatives, two members appointed by the Senate, one member appointed by speaker of the House and one member appointed by the president pro tem of the Senate.

Colorado and North Dakota have already passed similar legislation into law.

“Missouri’s economy is beginning to emerge from recession, and small business is largely responsible,” said Yeckel, who serves as chairman of the Senate Financial and Governmental Organization, Veterans' Affairs and Elections Committee. “Small business is big is big business in this state and Missouri government needs to assist small businesses, not make it more difficult for them to do business.”

Data recently released by the Small Business Administration shows that in 2000 49.6 percent of workers in Missouri were employed by businesses with fewer than 500

workers. Between 2001 and 2002, new companies with employees increased by nearly 16 percent to 16,337.

Nearly 41 percent of self-employed workers in Missouri in 2001 were women. There were 103,600 women-owned businesses in the state, which generated \$15 billion in revenue.

Minority-owned businesses made up 6.5 percent of the state's businesses and generated \$3.8 billion in revenue.

"Main Street is where America goes to work," said Thomas Sullivan, chief counsel for Advocacy for the Small Business Administration. "Small businesses are driving our economy and creating jobs."

According to the Missouri's Secretary of State's office there have been 13,972 rules filed since 1996. There were 2,442 rule makings filed in 2002 alone.

Nearly 120,000 small businesses are expected to benefit from the creation of this board.

"This legislation is the most important small business legislation the General Assembly will consider this session," said former Missouri State Treasurer Wendell Bailey, who now serves as regional advocate for the U.S. Small Business Administration in Kansas City. "Government rules and regulations are quickly becoming the number one obstacle to economic growth. This bill simply makes good sense."

Senate Bill 718 and House Bill 978 are identical to legislation passed during the 2003 Legislative Session, and vetoed by Gov. Bob Holden.

During the General Assembly's Veto Session in September, Yeckel led an unsuccessful effort to have the veto overridden. The measure failed with a 20 to 12 vote, with the vote falling largely along party lines. A two-thirds majority, or 23 votes, is needed to override a governor's veto.

"Because small business is small, state government often ignores the important role they play in our economy," said Baker. "Passing this legislation and putting this law into our statutes would be an acknowledgement that Missouri government wants the input of small business operators in determining the rules and regulations that govern them."

Following the press conference, testimony on SB 718 and HB 978 was presented in House and Senate committees.

