

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 22, 2004

## Senator John Loudon Gives Mid-Session Review, Second Half Expectations

---

*Describes Session as Successful to Date With Challenges, Opportunities Still Ahead*

---

ST. LOUIS – At the approximate mid-point of the year’s legislative session, Senator John Loudon, R-Ballwin, this week detailed the swift progress several of his key bills are making in the General Assembly.

“These first ten weeks have been extremely productive in helping to make Missouri a better place in which to do business, work, live and raise families,” Loudon said. “Great strides have been made in improving the state’s business climate, in turn creating more jobs and strengthening communities.”

Two of Loudon’s bills in particular are designed to help Missouri companies grow their businesses and expand their employment bases.

Senate Bill 856 reforms Missouri’s workers’ compensation law by, among several provisions, allowing payment for an injury only if incurred in an on-the-job accident that was the dominant factor in causing the condition. Loudon’s bill, already out of committee and before the full Senate, also limits benefits for pre-existing conditions aggravated in work-related injuries and invalidates claims on injuries occurring en route to work.

“People hurt while on the job deservedly warrant workers’ compensation,” Loudon said. “But the workers’ compensation system – and by extension, the employers funding the system – need safety checks to stamp out fraudulent claims so money remains available to help legitimate claimants.”

Loudon’s SB 737 also seeks to lower unreasonable costs to employers by reforming the state’s unemployment compensation laws. Among several provisions, the act requires the Division of Employment Security to regularly check to ensure that Missouri unemployment compensation recipients are not also earning wages. The bill, having already earned a public committee hearing in advance of traveling to the Senate floor, also sets a maximum weekly benefit of \$250.

“As with workers’ compensation, unemployment benefits are fully warranted by the vast majority of those receiving them,” Loudon, chairman of the Senate’s Small Business, Insurance and Industrial Relations Committee, said. “This bill simply enacts best management practices into state government to keep fraud in check and the program solvent.”

Loudon noted that current managerial oversight, or lack thereof, has pushed the state’s unemployment compensation fund more than \$175 million into the red at a growth rate of about \$1 million every day. To this end, Loudon also drafted a provision creating the Missouri Commission on Employment Security Financing, which would oversee the selling of bonds to revive the fund.

Loudon is also advancing legislation focusing on the health, safety and growth of the Missouri family.

Senate Bill 854 is designed to afford parents more say in the vaccination of their children. Current law allows parents only two exemptions from having their children vaccinated: an existing medical condition that could react to the vaccination, and a religious belief that does not embrace vaccinations. Loudon’s bill, also considered in a public committee hearing, enables a parent’s philosophic reservation to vaccinations to serve as an exemption.

“The administration of vaccinations is generally regarded as beneficial, but this regard is by no means universal,” said Loudon, who noted that many parents and some in the medical community attribute vaccinations with subsequent complications such as contracting the flu and possibly even leading to autism.

“This legislation returns to parents the health care decision making responsibility for their children. I am backing this measure because the freedoms to choose and then act on these choices lie in the pages of our Constitution, not on the desks of bureaucrats.”

Loudon’s Senate Bill 806 removes a cap on tax credits available to adoptive parents. Missouri offers Special Needs Adoption Tax Credits of up to \$10,000 to adoptive parents for non-recurring adoption expenses, such as travel to secure a child. Implemented four years ago, the program is similar in intent to those now in place in more than a dozen states.

Loudon’s family-friendly legislation, heard in committee and poised to travel to the full Senate, eliminates a current program cap of \$2 million; a move broadening the reach of the program and improving the chances for bringing together hopeful children and prospective parents.

“Special Needs Adoption Tax Credits have already helped provide scores of children with the gift of a mother and father while building Missouri families,” Loudon said. “Transforming even more orphans into family members by uncapping the program is a humane act and a sound investment in Missouri’s future.”

Following annual tradition, the Missouri Senate and House are adjourned this week for spring recess. Far from taking time off, Loudon is using the time in his district to prepare for the second half of the year’s regular legislative session, which runs to May 14<sup>th</sup>.

“Now comes the big push to guide what I started through to the end,” Loudon said. “There’s quite a bit of work left to do to make sure Missouri is a better place than it was when we began in January.”