

The famous author and speaker, Corrie Ten Boom, who endured great hardship in a Nazi concentration camp for her participation in hiding Jews in occupied Holland, tells a story from her childhood of a train ride she took with her father. On the journey she innocently asked her father the meaning of a term she'd heard that related to premarital sex. Instead of giving her a direct answer, her father, a watchmaker by trade, asked young Corrie to lift his heavy case containing watches for him. She protested that it was too heavy for her to which her father replied that the answer to the question she asked was also too heavy for her to carry at her young age.

In recent years, the protections surrounding the special time in life we call childhood have been steadily eroded. Its tough to be a kid anymore and increasingly our children are being given information that they are simply not mature enough to handle. One of the more glaring examples of this assault on innocence is the spread of huge billboards along Missouri's major highways advertising "adult cabarets" and other sexually oriented businesses.

In response to the expansion of these adult businesses and their bold and offensive advertising campaign I have filed legislation that would prohibit them from placing billboards within one mile of a state highway. This bill was given first round approval by the State Senate today and will soon be sent to the House of Representatives for their consideration.

The need for this bill was recently brought home by a story that was told to me of a grandpa driving down one of Missouri's highways with his young grandson. Upon seeing a sign advertising sex toys the boy wanted to know if they could stop. While he didn't understand the true nature of the business being advertised, he did recognize the word "toy" and was immediately interested. A parent or grandchild should be able to take a trip down Missouri's highways without having to worry that the little ones in their car will be exposed to the seedy messages and suggestive pictures bought and paid for by an industry with no regard for the innocence children.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.state.mo.us](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us). Also, you can read any of the bills I file on my website at: <http://www.senate.state.mo.us/04info/members/mem08.htm>). Thank you again for making it possible for me to serve in the Missouri Senate.