

Weekly Report  
Week of 3-29

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Years ago one Missouri politician made famous the saying, “the buck stops here.” Harry Truman understood the principle that in government, somebody must ultimately be responsible. In a similar vein, I have filed legislation that would put before the voters the question of whether the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) should be run by a director appointed by the governor.

Currently, MoDOT is operated by a commission made up of members of both political parties who are nominated by the governor. The problem with such an arrangement is that it is difficult for a commission to be held accountable for policy decisions with which the voters do not agree. For example, in recent years the commission decided to scrap the promised 1994 highway-funding plan that was funded by a special tax increase. This plan was supposed to dramatically improve road conditions and fund the development of many miles of additional four-lane highways. When it became known that the plan was financially flawed, the commission decided to abandon much of it despite the promises made.

It is clear that MoDOT has suffered with maintaining credibility with the voters and with members of the legislature. This fact was demonstrated recently when the citizens of Missouri voted down a proposed tax increase for highways, even though there is wide-spread consensus that our roads are in serious need of repair. I believe that when the people have their faith restored in MoDOT real progress can be made in improving Missouri’s roads and bridges.

The best way to do this is to make one person, appointed by the governor, ultimately responsible. The problem with the current system is that the voters are frustrated in their attempts to bring about change since the real decision-makers on transportation issues are insulated from public opinion. These commissioners are not elected and answer to no one. Letting the buck stop with the governor is the best way to make sure that Missouri’s politicians face the voters head on without hiding behind a commission.

I am committed to making this change and will continue to push for this plan which over half of the states and the federal government currently follow. The battle will not be an easy one.

Rural legislators are not in favor of my plan, fearing that their areas will lose out to more urban regions of the state in the division of available transportation dollars. Other political powers seem quite content with the current system as well, perhaps out of a desire to not have to take responsibility for the abysmal state of Missouri’s roads but I believe that the surest way to getting back on track with Missouri’s roads and bridges is

to bring back accountability. Having the governor's appointee make these controversial decisions does that.

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.