

Weekly Report
Week of 4-5

By: Sen. Matt Bartle
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As we enter the second half of the year's regular legislative session, the Missouri Senate has been hard at work on a variety of proposals. The Senate has given initial approval to Senate Bill 1371, a measure providing prescription drug coverage for those whose income levels had qualified them for the current state cost assistance plan, but is considered too high for their eligibility in the pending federal plan. The plan is designed to fill the federal "donut hole" that keeps a select group of seniors from getting coverage.

The Senate also passed SB 718, which would create the Small Business Regulatory Fairness Board to evaluate government regulations to ensure they are fair to small business owners; and SB 1020, a measure increasing public records accessibility by imposing a \$5,000 penalty to public entities purposely violating open records laws, and enacting a new standard and fine of \$1,000 for knowingly violating "sunshine" laws.

Senators also considered, amended and passed a supplemental funding bill for state departments and offices. Supplemental budget bills are commonly used to shore up unanticipated shortfalls and/or expenses as the budget year unfolds. Nearly half of the \$248 million in this added funding bill comes from federal sources, with \$37 million coming from the state's general fund.

The Senate Judiciary Committee, which I chair, approved SB 1359, a measure extending the statute of limitations for prosecuting cases of sexual offense against minors; and SB 1360, extending the statute of limitations in childhood abuse cases. These bills are designed to allow the grown victims of childhood sexual abuse to have an opportunity to see justice done for these horrible crimes. Currently, Missouri's statute of limitations law bars some of these cases from being heard in the state's civil or criminal courts.

The same committee has passed a measure clarifying that sheriffs can recoup the cost of issuing "conceal-and-carry" endorsements with money from the County Sheriff's Revolving Fund. The cost recovery language enables statewide uniform implementation of the state's right-to-carry legislation, which was adopted by the General Assembly last year and largely upheld by the state Supreme Court this year.

A House crime prevention panel recently heard testimony on and passed my SB 1000, a measure incorporating the DNA test results of all felony and sexual offenders in the state's profiling database. This bill has the potential to catch dozens of criminals by matching their DNA sample to old crime files held by the police.

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. 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.

