

## Common Sense

Most people in the State of Missouri are honest, hard-working citizens who believe in personal responsibility, take care of their own families, look after their neighbors and generally conduct their lives by the principle of common sense. However, there is always an element of the population that is out to get all they can for themselves regardless of what rules they break or what standards of decency they offend. This session we passed several bills that won't actually affect most people in Eastern Jackson County since most of us would never dream of engaging in the behavior these bills were written to outlaw. Here are some examples.

Americans love to eat and they love to eat junk food. You might say that eating junk food is as American as apple pie and of course apple pie would probably be classified as junk food. From backyard barbeques to trips through the drive-through we too often fill our plates and expand our waistlines with foods that are high in calories and saturated fats. While most people realize that too many French fries are bad for their health, most do not hire a lawyer and try to sue the company that sold them the food when they develop health or weight problems. Most I say, but not all. Unfortunately, there is an element of society that is trying to do just that. If they were successful in court it could mean higher food prices for the rest of us as food companies passed along their huge losses to consumers.

In response to this threat from frivolous lawsuits, the legislature passed a bill this session that would protect manufacturers, distributors and sellers of food from lawsuits arising in response to obesity, weight gain or associated health problems. This law was necessary to protect legitimate businesses we all patronize from the few who are out to find, shall we say, a free lunch.

On the related theme of outlawing acts that most common-sense Missourians would never do, the General Assembly approved legislation to outlaw the use of a device that is available for sale over the Internet that allows the driver of a car to automatically turn a traffic light green as they approach. These devices work well for police and fire departments but their use by a private citizen is obviously inappropriate and very inconsiderate to others stuck in traffic.

It is readily apparent that there are always a few who won't play by the rules and use their commonsense. It is this unmistakable fact of life keeps the legislature busy and I guess provides job security for politicians like me!

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.