

Weekly Report
Week of 8-23

By: Sen. Matt Bartle
(573) 751-1464

Over the course of a legislative session there are many issues in the state legislature that bring about spirited debate and differences of opinion yet there are some issues that enjoy widespread support. One such area in which there has historically been broad-based bipartisan agreement is in the legislature's attempt to promote a culture of life. Year after year, Missourians send representatives and senators to Jefferson City who respect the dignity of human life and are committed to protecting the smallest and weakest among us.

This past session the legislature considered several bills that aimed to protect and promote life. While not all of these measures passed, much good was accomplished and several proposals constituting a direct attack on the sanctity of human life were stopped. Here is a recap of some of the important life issues debated by the General Assembly during the last legislative session.

Parental Consent: The unfortunate resistance of a determined minority in the Senate stalled and ultimately killed a bill that would have made an adult who took a minor across state lines in order to get around Missouri's parental consent law legally liable. This bill also contained language similar to a provision I sponsored that would have prohibited a person with a financial interest in performing abortions (like Planned Parenthood employees) from having special status to help a minor apply to the court for an abortion without parental permission. This bill also required doctors who perform abortions to have surgical privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the abortion clinic. I was sorry to see these common sense measures defeated by a minority of the Senate.

Adoption Tax Credits: On a more positive note, the legislature increased funding by \$2 million for a program that gives a special tax credit to individuals who adopt a child. Promoting adoption is one of the most important messages the legislature can send to those who are trying to decide whether to keep their child. Increasing the State's commitment to help families finance adoption by increasing our funding for this tax credit is a step in the right direction.

Birth Certificates for Stillborn Children: Few events in the life of a family are more tragic than the loss of a pre-born child. A bill passed by the legislature this session allows the mother of a child who is stillborn to determine the disposition of the fetal remains. It would also allow retroactive application for a birth certificate for the child. This bill highlights how important it is for these families to have this official recognition by the State of Missouri of the brief but important life of their baby.

Cloning: On the defensive side, the Senate stopped efforts to use state tax dollars to fund experimentation that ultimately destroys a living human embryo. Unfortunately, legislation I sponsored to place an outright ban on the destruction of these embryos did not pass. There is hopeful news on the scientific front that blood may yield stem cells. Stem cell research is very exciting and holds great promise. However, I am opposed to harvesting stem cells from human clones. There are other ways to get these valuable cells that do not involve the destruction of a human life.

The effort to promote a culture of life in the United States has perhaps had no greater advocate than former President Ronald Reagan. Let me close with a portion of an essay he wrote during his presidency. In his essay, Reagan eloquently sums up the essence of why protecting life at all stages of development is so important with a quote from an English writer who said of human life the following: . . . “however low it flickers or fiercely burns, it is still a Divine flame which no man dare presume to put out, be his motives ever so humane and enlightened.”

Be it an embryo or a full-term baby, the legislature has a duty to protect these young lives. I am hopeful that more can be done next year to protect the weakest among us.

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: www.senate.mo.gov/bartle Thank you again for making it possible for me to serve in the Missouri Senate.