

New Bills Filed for New Session of the Legislature

Although it is hard to believe the year has flown by so quickly, last Wednesday marked the unofficial beginning of the 2005 legislative session. By Senate Rules on the first day of December the Secretary of the Senate takes the proposed bills that have been given to her by each senator, prefiles them and assigns them an official number. The bills are then made public.

In theory pre-filing slightly improves the bill's chances of ultimately being passed by the legislature and going to the governor for his signature. Each bill is given a number based on the order in which it was filed. For example, the senate's most senior member will have his or her first three bills filed with the lowest available numbers (e.g. SB 1, SB 2 and SB 3). Then the next most senior senator's three priority bills will be numbered and so on. The bills with the lowest numbers are often first to be assigned to committees for consideration and potentially the first to be passed by a committee and sent to the full senate for debate.

Of course, getting a low number doesn't guarantee that a bill will get a quick hearing. There are too many forces at play in the legislature that can derail a bill. For example, a committee chairman can refuse to grant a hearing to a bill or even if a bill is heard, the committee may never vote on it or they may vote it down. One of the most common ways bills die in the legislature is that even after getting a passing vote in committee, the chairman (who is only allowed to send to the full senate a small number of bills each session) tucks the bill away in his or her files and it never again sees the light of day.

Like many senators, I have pre-filed part of my legislative package for the 2005 session and these bills have been assigned numbers. Here are a few highlights of the proposals I will be working on this session. As mentioned before I have proposed legislation to allow a modest toll on I-70 to help bring this major thoroughfare into the 21st century. I have also proposed legislation to help protect our communities from the effects of the smut shops that have proliferated in recent years. As Missouri enters a time of economic recovery I am also proposing a change to the constitution to require the state to set up a savings account during prosperous years so that we don't find ourselves in the "red" during years that are less economically robust.

This is just a sample of the things I'll be working on this session. If you'd like to see a complete list of the bills I've prefiled you can view them at:

<http://www.senate.state.mo.us/05info/members/mem08.htm>

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 or by phone at (888) 711-9278.