

Weekly Report
Week of 5-10

By: Sen. Matt Bartle
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For the past three years I have been working on legislation to eliminate billboards that advertise smut shops. These billboards are becoming more numerous and more offensive each year. I filed Senate Bill 870 to address this problem. Last Thursday the Missouri House of Representatives passed SB 870 with a 140-18 vote. The Senate passed the bill and sent it to the governor with a vote of 33-0. As can be seen, bipartisan support is easy to come by when we are dealing with smut shop advertisements that subject our children to sexually explicit messages.

The governor has already indicated that he will sign this bill into law. However, existing billboards will have three years to come into compliance. We reluctantly added this phase-in to strengthen our hand in the constitutional battle that the porn industry is sure to mount.

An adult business will be able to only display two signs – one showing the business name and hours of operation and the other denoting that it is off limits to minors.

Even though three years sounds like a long time, relief could come sooner than expected. Many billboard companies have informally stated that they will not allow porn shops to renew their contracts when they come due. The sooner this junk is eliminated the better.

The porn industry has already stated its intention to challenge my bill in court. I say to them: Bring it on! If we back down from passing laws every time one of these bullies threatens to file a lawsuit, we wouldn't pass anything.

We made sure to carefully craft legislation that should withstand a constitutional challenge. The government can, and we are showing that we will, regulate commercial speech that is an embarrassment to our state.

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.