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**SERIAL KILLER'S ARREST UNDERSCORES NEED FOR MANDATORY
DNA TESTING OF ALL CONVICTED FELONS**

JEFFERSON CITY – With only three weeks remaining in the 2004 session, the Missouri House of Representatives has yet to pass legislation that would require mandatory DNA testing of all convicted felons in the custody of the State Department of Corrections. Sen. Matt Bartle, R-Lee's Summit, has filed legislation that would require such testing which has been shown to be a valuable crime solving tool.

The urgent need for such legislation was underscored last week as law enforcement officers in Kansas City used an old DNA sample to apprehend a man suspected of killing 12 women over the space of three decades.

“Last week's arrest of a serial killer living and working among us through the use of a simple DNA test demonstrates the urgent need for the Missouri legislature to act quickly to revise our outdated law and expand our use of this valuable technology,” said Bartle. “The passage of SB 1000 would dramatically improve the ability of law enforcement to track down predators who for too long have gotten away with their crimes.”

Jackson County Prosecutor Mike Sanders worked closely with Bartle in developing this legislation, which is based on a Virginia law passed in 1990. Since that time, more than 1,200 cold cases have been solved by using DNA.

“We have a responsibility to protect our communities by utilizing this very powerful and effective tool to help solve crimes, convict the guilty as well as exonerate the innocent. Had it not been for the dedication of the police department coupled with advances in DNA technology, who knows how long these crimes would have gone unsolved?” said Sanders.

Missouri law currently allows for DNA samples to be taken from felons convicted of crimes involving sexual offenses but does not allow testing of other felons.

“People who are convicted of committing a crime are likely to commit more crimes. This bill is an attempt to bring public policy in line with this reality,” said Bartle. “Right now approximately 60,000 people are in Missouri’s prison or probation and parole systems and many of these people will not only commit crimes in future but may be running from crimes committed in the past.”

DNA, the chemical that embodies a person's genetic programming, can be found almost everywhere. People shed a constant torrent of dead skin cells. Criminals leave blood when breaking and entering; they shed hair and skin cells in fights, deposit saliva on glasses and leave sweat stains in head bands. From only a few cells in such sources, enough DNA can be extracted to identify the owner.

The bill has passed the Senate and has been sent to the Missouri House of Representatives for consideration.