



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

John Loudon
7th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 422
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

For Immediate Release:
March 9, 2005

Contact: Mark Meuser
(573) 751-9763

SLAPP Legislation Stymied in Legislative Logjam

JEFFERSON CITY – On the heels of Tom Diehl’s vindication, legislators are anxiously looking to expand protection of citizens’ free speech rights. This year, Senator Loudon, R-Ballwin, filed legislation expanding protection from frivolous lawsuits for those who wish to participate in the public process.

“The Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously endorsed my bill,” Loudon said. “However, it is just a practical reality that many major pieces of legislation are in the committee in front of this bill.”

Loudon and a bi-partisan coalition of legislators are seeking other bills upon which to attach their SLAPP legislation. The coalition includes co-sponsors Senator Michael Gibbons, R-Kirkwood; Senator Harry Kennedy, D-St. Louis; Representative Walt Bivins, R-St. Louis; Representative Jim Lembke, R-St. Louis and Representative Sue Schoemehl, D-St. Louis.

This year’s bill allows citizens who have been sued for exercising their First Amendment rights the additional right to seek punitive damages. Further, the bill prevents anyone guilty of bringing a SLAPP suit against a citizen from deducting legal fees as a cost of doing business.

“The State of Missouri is not going to reward businesses who attempt to scare Missourians out of participating in the public process with huge lawsuits with lower costs just because they can argue that it is a cost of doing business,” Loudon said. “If a business loses a SLAPP suit, they should not, and will not be rewarded.”

-END-

