

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for
week of **May 02**, 2005

Fighting Crime While Racing the Clock

With less than two weeks left to this year's session, legislators in the General Assembly in Jefferson City are racing the clock to get their bills passed. In an effort to get legislation passed, many bills that relate to the same subject are rolled together into bills that are dubbed "omnibus" bills.

This year I am handling a large omnibus crime bill that includes many other bills sponsored by other legislators from both parties. Part of why this bill is so big is because it has been a long time since we have passed a large crime bill, so we are trying to work on several different provisions at once.

As I mentioned last week, the bill includes my provisions to close the loophole created last week by the Missouri Supreme Court that threw out part of Missouri's law criminalizing sexual misconduct with a minor. It also includes my provision to require electronic monitoring of pedophiles. Here are a few of the other provisions that I think will help improve Missouri's criminal law and will make our communities safer.

The bill:

- Allows courts to order those convicted of a crime to reimburse police officers for the costs of the arrest, including blood testing;
- Allows the court to order restitution be paid to the victim of tampering or auto theft;
- Prohibits the probation board from making certain consecutive sentences into concurrent sentences; this would help prevent a situation where a criminal is released from prison prematurely by letting him serve two or more sentences at the same time;
- Prohibits some convicted child molesters from getting probation;
- Prohibits a person or group from posting an individual's Social Security number, including using it as an employee number for job-related activities, and strengthens penalties for identity theft;
- Expands the definition of endangering a child to including making methamphetamine at a place where a child lives; and
- Increases penalties for exploiting the elderly and disabled for money.

Most of these sections have come from other bills that have already been heard in committees in the House or Senate. But since our legislative session is only four and a half months long, time is precious and many good bills die simply for lack of time to debate and vote on them. By rolling many of these bills into one large bill, it gives them an opportunity to be heard and debated. It is my hope that we will be able to complete our work on this bill and put it on the governor's desk for his signature before the clock runs out next Friday.

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. Thank you again for making it possible for me to serve in the Missouri Senate.

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