

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for

Week of July 18, 2005

Safety, Life Sciences, Legislation Signed Into Law

The Missouri Constitution gives the governor 45 days in which to deliberate over bills passed by the legislature and to decide whether or not he will sign them into law. Last week was a busy week as Governor Blunt signed a number of bills prior to Friday's deadline.

Among the important measures he signed were proposals I sponsored to require repeat sex offenders to wear GPS guided electronic monitoring trackers. The first few hours after a child is kidnapped are critical. This technology will give law enforcement the ability to track the movements of sex offenders in the area where the child was abducted. It will also create an electronic trail of where these sex offenders have been. The law requires the tracker to be worn indefinitely even after the person has completed the terms of his parole.

Also, the governor signed a bill containing a measure I authored to impose common sense regulation on adult businesses. The bill becomes effective late next month and a lawsuit by "smut shop" owners looms.

But more on these new laws later. While these proposals have received attention by the press, another bill I sponsored that was also signed by the governor last week has gone virtually unnoticed. This legislation, SB 323, is designed to expand and promote ethical stem cell research by assisting existing umbilical cord blood banks and helping establish new ones throughout the state.

Umbilical cord blood, preserved after a new baby is born, is a non-controversial source of stem cells, which are considered to be the building blocks of life. Non-controversial adult stem cells can be used in the treatment of all kinds of diseases including more than 60 different cancers, genetic diseases, blood disorders and immune deficiencies and more potentially life-saving applications are constantly being developed.

The use of adult stem cells derived from umbilical cord blood in medical research offers an important and powerful alternative to embryonic stem cell research that show far less promise. In fact, at last count there were 65 human treatments developed from adult stem cells. Although we hear much hype in the news, there are no clinically proven treatments from embryonic stem cell research.

Senate Bill 323 creates eligibility criteria under which the state's Life Sciences Research Board can award grants to umbilical cord blood banks to be used to fund collection and distribution of this rich source of stem cells for treatment and research. Conditions include the ability and experience of a grant applicant and the level of commitment to cord blood bank to maintain its operation after a grant contract expires.

Stem cell research and the study of life sciences is one of the most promising keys to preserving and bettering human life. Although the program authorized by SB 323 is subject to future appropriations by the legislature for grant funding, authorizing the creation of this research program is an important step in promoting this increasingly important component of our state's economic engine.

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 at (888) 711-9278 or by e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.state.mo.us.

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