

Column from Sen. Matt Bartle for

Week of Aug. 15, 2005

PROMOTING LIFE TO BE A FOCUS OF SPECIAL SEPTEMBER SESSION OF THE LEGISLATURE

The Missouri Constitution mandates that the state legislature will convene in Jefferson City every January and that the session will end in mid-May. Most years once the legislature adjourns in May we do not reassemble until September for a short 2 to 3 day veto session (this is also constitutionally mandated to give the House and Senate a chance to override any of the governor's vetoes).

This year promises to be different. The governor this week called for the legislature to come back to Jefferson City in September to deal with a handful of issues – chief among them to pass legislation promoting a culture of life and strengthening Missouri's laws protecting the unborn.

Legislation that would have done this was proposed and debated in the regular session of the legislature earlier this year. Versions of the bill passed both the House and the Senate on different occasions but the clock ran out before the exact same version was passed by both houses as is required in order for a bill to become law. Consequently, we'll be back in Jefferson City for a couple of weeks in September to finish the job.

Leaving aside the technical and mundane discussion of the exact procedure required to pass a bill into law, let me comment on the substance of what we are trying to accomplish. The legislation that was considered earlier this year but that ultimately failed to pass would have done several things.

First, it would have helped close a loophole whereby minors are whisked away across state lines and are given abortions without the consent of their parents. This is an open opportunity to a sexual predator to get rid of the evidence of his crime by taking his victim to another state for an abortion.

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The second major provision would have required abortionists to have hospital privileges within 30 miles of the place where they perform abortions. In addition to snuffing out the life of an unborn child, abortion is a very serious medical procedure. There is no excuse for allowing traveling abortionists to swing into town once a week and perform these procedures without even having privileges at a local hospital in case there is an emergency or a need for the woman to be admitted.

Other provisions passed by the Senate that should be considered in the upcoming special session include a requirement that entities who receive public money follow strict auditing practices to make sure that tax dollars aren't being mixed with funds going to provide abortions, a program that would allow tax credits for those who give to crisis pregnancy centers and a ban on abortion providers from teaching sex education to our kids or from becoming court appointed caretakers for pregnant girls. Other worthwhile provisions were proposed as well and I am hopeful that many of them will be rolled into the legislation that will be considered by the legislature next month.

Promoting a culture of life and passing common sense regulations on the multi-million dollar abortion business is an important public policy goal. I will keep you posted as to the progress of this legislation during the upcoming special session.

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.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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