

“PEACE ON EARTH – GOOD WILL TO MEN”

“I would rather have peace in the world than be President.” These words were spoken nearly 60 years ago by President Harry Truman in his Christmas message to the nation, given from Independence, Missouri. In this phrase President Truman captured one of the most important and meaningful parts of Christmas.

Christmas is a time for many wonderful things. It is filled with the traditions and trappings that we’ve all come to love from childhood. Stories of Santa and reindeer, reruns of classic movies, gathering with family and friends, old stories, brightly wrapped gifts and a thousand other cherished memories that make this time of year so special.

But just as surely as December 25 will arrive (although ever so slowly to our kids) so too will come December 26. The magic of the lights and tinsel, of the songs and the gifts will give way to the reality of fatigue, bills and gray winter days. What then is the lasting significance of Christmas?

As President Truman correctly noted, it is peace. It seems that to desire peace one must first experience unrest, and the world of 1948 had seen more than its share. The armed conflict of the recently ended Second World War had given way to the tenuous truce of the Cold War, but even that peace was increasingly threatened by the gathering of ominous storm clouds of world events.

2005 is not remarkably different from the world of Truman’s day. Peace around the world still proves elusive – leaving us to wonder if the message of Christmas is no more real than the red-suited elf that will soon disappear from shopping malls and television commercials.

Yet, in reality, that is the most delightful part of Christmas – that behind all the trappings there still rings a message that is as true in our day as it was the day it was uttered by angels nearly 2000 years ago. “For there is born unto you this day . . . a Savior, who is Christ the Lord . . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’”

From our family to yours – Merry Christmas! May there truly be peace on earth and peace within our hearts as we embrace the true meaning of Christmas.

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 or by phone at (888) 711-9278.