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that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Legislation Curbing Underage Drinking Awaits Governor's Signature

JEFFERSON CITY – New tools to combat underage drinking to protect children in Missouri are on their way to becoming law thanks to legislation sponsored by Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood. Gibbons said he sponsored the legislation that increases and adds penalties on underage drinking as an attempt to help curb this growing epidemic.

“Every student in Missouri is going to be confronted with underage drinking,” Gibbons said. “These changes are part of an effort on all fronts – home, school, community and law enforcement, to protect our children and help them say no when that day comes.”

Gibbons said he was alarmed when he learned that students who abuse alcohol are increasing. Four out of five Missouri high schoolers acknowledged having tried alcohol and, frighteningly, one out of three admitted to being binge drinkers.

Senate Bill 402 changes misdemeanor penalties to address both the possession and consumption of alcohol by minors. Under the act, a minor could now be found guilty of a “minor in possession” if he or she is visibly intoxicated or has a blood alcohol content of more than .02. Any minor found guilty of a “minor in possession” would now lose their driver’s license for 30 days for a first offense.

The measure also prohibits adults from allowing minors to drink on their private property unless they are the minor’s legal guardian.

“This bill holds parents responsible if they host house parties where minors are drinking,” Gibbons said. “We must start by protecting our children at the homes of others and reinforce that effort in our schools and communities.”

Gibbons said students testified that a good deterrent to abusing alcohol would be losing access to participate in school activities. In response to that, the measure requires school districts to create a policy detailing the consequences if a student is found to either possess or drink alcohol on school property or at school events.

The bill now awaits the governor’s signature to become law.

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