



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

*Free and fair discussion
is the firmest friend of truth.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 7, 2005

Parents Play Important Role in New Underage Drinking Law

JEFFERSON CITY – Parents, not just minors, are now held legally responsible for underage drinking warned Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, who sponsored a law that creates new tools to combat the growing epidemic. The new law took effect on Sunday, Aug. 28, and increases and adds penalties for both minors and adults.

Gibbons says parents play an important role in curbing underage drinking, particularly by what they allow to happen at home. The law now prohibits adults from allowing minors to drink on their private property unless they are the minor's legal guardian. If an adult allows underage drinking or knowingly fails to stop underage drinking on their property they will now be guilty of a misdemeanor.

"Parents are now 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."

The new law also 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, 90 days for a second offense, and one year for a third offense.

"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 high school 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 either drinking or possessing alcohol on school property or at school events.

"We're not going to stop underage drinking," Gibbons said. "But when four out of five high schoolers say they've tried alcohol and one out of three of them admitted being binge drinkers, we have to take these steps to help turn the tide and keep our kids safe and sober."

###