

CAPITOL REPORT

Senator Luann Ridgeway

February 10, 2005

This is the first report I have written as your State Senator. Thanks for allowing me to serve in years past as State Representative and now as Senator.

This report is designed to give you fast facts concerning legislative events in your capitol. I throw in some other information from time to time as well. The legislative year is just beginning so I look forward to hearing from you.

Legislative Calendar

- The Missouri Senate and House are in session from January through mid-May each year.
- The Senate and House meet Monday through Thursday during session, except for one week in March.

Bills of Interest This Week

- The Senate gave approval to a bill to revamp Missouri's worker's compensation system. It now moved to the House for debate (*details below*).
- The Senate Judiciary Committee is scheduled to vote next Monday (2/14) on a bill to prevent human cloning (somatic cell nuclear transfer procedure).
- The Senate approved a bill to help curb production of methamphetamine. The bill changes the law so that over-the-counter cold medicines containing pseudoephedrine can only be purchased from pharmacists or registered pharmacy technicians (SB 10).
- **Budget-** The process is just beginning. Education will receive more funding. Welfare programs and Medicaid will receive less money. So far, the most calls generated to my office concern the Governor's proposal to terminate the First Steps (a program that, though poorly administered, has helped many developmentally disabled children in Missouri). I intend to work to amend the program, not end it.

Worker's Compensation Details

- **History of WC System-** Missouri enacted its worker's compensation law in 1925 as a way to provide medical treatment and compensation to workers who were injured while on the job and to shield employers from being hit with expensive and unpredictable lawsuits by injured workers. Until this system

was established, Missouri employees who were hurt while working had to file civil suits against their employers to obtain compensation.

- The number of worker's comp claims has fallen in the past few years, but the cost per claim is rising.
- This week we approved a bill that revises Missouri's workers' compensation laws in an effort to lower insurance premiums for Missouri businesses.
- **The legislation will change the law so:**
 - Work must be "the prevailing factor" rather than a "substantial factor" in the injury for the worker to receive compensation.
 - Injury incurred while someone is traveling to or from work will not be compensated.
 - Injury incurred while someone is legally drunk on the job will not receive compensation either.
 - Anyone found guilty of false workers' comp claims or other means of fraud in the system will be charged with a Class D felony, which is punishable by a maximum of four years in prison.
- Now that the Senate has approved the bill, it will be sent to the House for similar consideration. Once the House passes it, the governor must sign it in order for it to become law.

Lincoln's Birthday is February 12th!

Lesser known facts about Abraham Lincoln:

- He was defeated 5 times in total for various public offices prior to his successful election as President.
- Lincoln's Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863 eventually led to the establishment of our National Thanksgiving holiday.
- Lincoln had no problem professing his Christian faith in public.
- Here is the text of his **1863 Proclamation of Thanksgiving:**

“The year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the Source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the field of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than theretofore. Population has steadily

increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.” ~ *President Abraham Lincoln*

Well said Mr. Lincoln. Happy Birthday. I can't think of a better way to conclude my 1st Capitol Report to you from the Missouri Senate.

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