



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Senator Bill Stouffer Fights for Private Property Rights

Richmond family's property rights become center of legislative battle

JEFFERSON CITY – Senator Bill Stouffer, R-Napton, today publicly declared his support for Missouri property owners struggling to receive compensation for property invasion by companies that have installed cable lines through properties between rural communities throughout the state.

For example, property owners Gary and Janice Ogg of Richmond, live on a Ray County farm that has been in their family for more than 100 years. They are unable to use farm equipment, a combine, on parts of their property because of a cable line placed on poles under electric lines. The Oggs never issued permission or easements for the cable. The couple later filed suit against the cable company who backed out of a promise to pay the Oggs for use of their property. The Western District Court of Appeals in Missouri ruled in favor of the Oggs and charged the involved cable company with trespassing; however, the Oggs have yet to see any compensation.

“This nation was founded on the idea of personal property rights,” Stouffer said to his colleagues on the senate floor. “Cable is not a utility and owners should be compensated for use of their land.”

Complicating the matter is a bill under debate in the Missouri General Assembly that would allow cable companies to lay cable without compensating landowners. Senate Bill 237 would give cable companies the rights currently afforded to public utilities, such as electric and natural gas cooperatives, without any of their responsibilities.

“I’m not interested in meddling with the judicial process. However, I can not stand to watch any one run over the basic rights of property owners,” Stouffer said. “This isn’t about singling out a specific industry or company—it is about what is fair and just when it comes to private property rights.”

The Missouri Western District Court of Appeals found that cable television companies did not have any statutory authority to use highway right-of-ways free of charge. The bill grants cable television companies the privilege to use state highway right-of-ways free of charge. Language providing these protections for cable companies was added to the bill just before the Missouri House passed it on Wednesday, April 27.

The Missouri Farm Bureau has voiced its opposition to SB 237, because of the violation to personal property rights.

“When Missouri begins to allow any one to tread all over the rights of property owners, including farming families, someone must stand against it,” said Stouffer.

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Senator Bill Stouffer represents Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray and Saline counties and northeast Clay County in the state legislature. He can be reached at his capitol office at (573) 751-1507, or toll free at (866) 768-3987.