



THE STOUFFER REPORT

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Senate District 21

Capitol Building, Room 332
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For Immediate Release:
Dec. 22, 2005

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Legislative Survey Gives Constituents a Chance to Air Their Opinions

A lawmaker's most important function is serving the constituents of his or her district. After all, without the support of those citizens back home, legislators would not have been sent to the Capitol in the first place. I think politicians forget that sometimes. So in my continued effort to better understand the opinions of my constituents, I soon will have on my Senate Web page a survey for use by members of the 21st District.

The legislative survey asks for constituents' opinions on several issues that will be important and highly contentious in the 2006 session.

Among the issues is eminent domain, the process of seizing private property for public use, such as roads and bridges. The issue was raised in this year's Kelo vs. New London U.S. Supreme Court case, in which the high court ruled "public use" could include private development, such as shopping centers. I am asking constituents if they feel property should be allowed to be used for public use, private development, or neither.

Another important debate concerns school funding. Gov. Blunt has proposed requiring school districts to dedicate at least 65 percent of funding to classroom expenses, which include teacher salaries, textbooks, athletics and computers. Items not considered classroom expenses include libraries, guidance counselors, health services and transportation. My survey asks if members of the 21st District support such a state mandate.

Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) are also included in the survey. Debate over their impact on nearby communities led to proposals to impose stricter local regulations on agriculture. I am looking to gauge public opinion on this important issue.

Two ballot initiatives have been introduced to raise the state sales tax on cigarettes by 80 cents per pack. One proposal would use the revenue for anti-smoking programs and to help pay doctors, hospitals and clinics for treating uninsured and Medicaid patients. A separate measure would dedicate the funding to restore Medicaid coverage to individuals cut from the program in 2005. I am interested to see if citizens of the 21st District support or oppose either measure.

The survey also includes questions if Missouri should implement toll roads on Interstate 70, whether the Missouri Department of Conservation's one-eighth cent sales tax should be put to a vote every 10 years, and other important issues.

I encourage all members of the 21st District to take time out to complete this survey. Doing so will ensure your voice is heard and you are properly represented in Jefferson City.

If you have questions or comments about this issue or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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