



WEEKLY REPORT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Unfinished Business

JEFFERSON CITY— Earlier this year, state lawmakers deliberated on legislation that would have moved the pro-life movement forward. But when session ended in May, the Senate and House had yet to agree on the language that would protect the safety of young women and the lives of the unborn. Because Gov. Matt Blunt understands the importance of this legislation, he called a special session to convene on September 6 to strengthen abortion-related laws.

The legislation we will be looking at again would ultimately reduce the number of abortions in our state and make safer the administering of abortions that do occur. Pregnant girls from Missouri have been going across state borders to Illinois to abort their pregnancies because Illinois does not require parental consent. One provision of the bill would prohibit anyone from knowingly helping a pregnant girl under 18 travel to another state to get an abortion without her parent's consent. The other goal of the legislation is to require doctors to have gynecological-care privileges at a hospital within 30 miles of the clinic where they perform abortions. This will ensure that girls who get an abortion will receive the best care possible, and should any complications occur, a qualified hospital would be nearby.

The governor has also charged us with the task of fixing a few drafting errors in other pieces of legislation that were approved this past session. Senate Bills 37, 402 and House Bill 972 are alcohol-related laws with a few discrepancies in the language, such as conflicting degrees of criminal charges for adults who knowingly allow minors other than their own children to drink on their property. We will be redrafting parts of the laws so that all of them match. I was the sponsor of Senate Bill 37, which among its many provisions includes "Jessica's Law," creating a gradation of penalties according to the conditions under which an alcohol-related crime that resulted in a fatality was

committed. The measure also stiffens penalties for repeat drunk-driving offenders. None of the language of “Jessica’s Law” will be altered, so we will continue to try to deter drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel and devastating the lives of innocent people. We will also work to clear up the conflicting language in two bills; one makes illegal the distribution of a prescription drug at school by anyone under 18, and the other prohibits it by anyone under 21. We will discuss the two versions and come up with a suitable agreement.

This past session we succeeded in making sweeping changes to Missouri’s workers’ compensation laws. The bill inadvertently included a provision that disallowed injured workers from qualifying for workers’ compensation. Because that drafting error negates the very purpose of the system, we will adjust the language so the workers’ compensation continues to provide injured workers with basic compensation while protecting employers from outrageous lawsuits for work-related injuries.

We have also been asked by the governor to repeal the law that bans the posting of elected or appointed government officials’ home addresses or phone numbers on the Internet. The genesis for the law was to protect public officials from harassment and threats, but because the public has a right to know certain things about those who represent them in state government, we will be tweaking the legislation to better serve all Missourians.

The special session isn’t expected to last more than a week or two because most of the loose ends will be tied up neatly and quickly. I am eager to fix the discrepancies in the newly passed laws and to implement new restrictions on abortion, which will mark even further progress for the prevailing pro-life platform in Missouri.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*