



Eminent Domain Protections Enacted, and Revenue Totals Up

JEFFERSON CITY — Missourians have received quite a bit of good news lately with the signing of legislation protecting Missouri property owners from eminent domain abuse and the announcement that state revenue is in better shape than expected.

The Supreme Court's *Kelo v. New London* decision allowing governments to take private property for use by other, more profitable private entities was an affront to property rights. House Bill 1944 changes state law to help ensure that the rights of Missourians are not for sale to the highest bidder.

HB 1944 bars eminent domain from being used solely for economic development and prohibits farmland from being considered "blighted." The legislation further requires factors such as fair market value and heritage value to be considered when deciding fair compensation for property taken through eminent domain. Those who have had their homes taken by a condemning authority are required to receive 25 percent more than the home's value. Under the heritage-value provision, homes, farms or businesses that have been in the same extended family for at least 50 years will automatically receive an additional 50 percent of the land's value. These provisions offer needed protections to Missouri property owners.

In addition to this newly enacted legislation, Missourians also were treated to the news that year-end revenue tallies show the highest rate of growth in more than two decades. Over Missouri's 2006 fiscal year, which ended June 30, state general revenue showed a 9.2 percent rate of growth, a figure well outside the historical norm. Total net collections outpaced the estimated 4.9 percent growth by \$292.4 million. Further, Missouri created nearly 50,000 jobs in the past 18 months, and our state is now home to a historic 2.8 million jobs.

These unprecedented economic advances are no accident. Over the past several years, lawmakers have implemented lawsuit and workers' compensation reforms while exercising smart fiscal management. Meanwhile, Missouri's private industries are making the most of a growing economy.

Indicators such as this show that our state is moving in the right direction, and I vow to continue efforts to provide for the citizens of our great state.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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