



---

## **As Session Approaches, Lawmakers Gear Up for Lengthy Legislative Process**

JEFFERSON CITY — The coming of the new year brings with it the opportunity for my fellow lawmakers and me to return to Jefferson City to implement legislation benefiting the people of Missouri. There will be a wide variety of interesting and important topics to address in the 2007 session; however, this week I would like to offer a brief outline of the Missouri Legislature so constituents will have a better understanding of what goes on at the state Capitol.

The First Regular Session of the 94th General Assembly convenes at 12 p.m. Jan. 3, 2007. Session will end at 6 p.m., Friday, May 18, in accordance with the Missouri Constitution. A spring recess has been scheduled to begin upon adjournment Thursday, March 15, with lawmakers reconvening Monday, March 26.

Each state senator is a member of several legislative committees specializing in certain subjects. I am a member of the Senate Financial, Governmental Organizations, and Elections; Small Business, Insurance and Industrial Relations; and Transportation committees. I also serve on the Senate Interim Committee on the Cost of a College Education.

Senate committees take up bills they have been assigned by the Senate president pro tem. They hold public hearings on legislation and make recommendations for or against the measures according to the merits of the bills they've examined. Bills reported favorably from committee are then taken up by the entire legislative body for "perfection," essentially a first-round vote by the Senate in which amendments can be added to legislation. Once perfected, the final version of the bill goes on the calendar for final reading and passage by a constitutional majority.

When bills are up for perfection and final approval, debate can be at its most dramatic. This is the point when disagreements are most enthusiastically voiced on the chamber floor, and the Senate is the place where a single lawmaker's opposition can threaten to derail legislation. Filibuster is the practice of a senator or group of senators extending debate on legislation to delay or prevent its passage. Because a single senator can utilize such power, the filibuster has been valued in the American tradition as the ultimate protection of the will of the minority. Although rarely practiced, the threat of filibuster is often used to achieve compromise on contentious measures. However, there are mechanisms at the state and federal levels to end filibusters.

When finally passed, Senate bills are then reported to the House, where they undergo a similar process. Any provisions added in the House must be approved by the Senate; otherwise members of both chambers will convene in a conference committee to reach a compromise. The conference report then goes to each chamber, and upon approval the bill is declared “truly agreed to and finally passed” and is sent to the governor to be signed into law.

The legislative process is long and arduous, which is why the vast majority of bills do not survive. However, I look forward to returning to the Capitol to take part in an honorable public service that instills great pride in all those fortunate enough to serve as Missouri lawmakers. Thank you for providing me that opportunity, and I promise to do my best to serve the people of Lincoln and St. Charles counties. I also wish everyone in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District a safe and happy holiday season.

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.

# # #