



SENATOR MATT BARTLE

District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 431 Jefferson City, MO 65101

Column for Week of:
January 16, 2006

Contact: Todd Scott
(573) 751-1464 / (888) 711-9278

Sen. Bartle's Expanded DNA Profiling System Also Solving Property Crime

As law-enforcement agencies work tirelessly to solve crimes in our communities, a new Missouri law is giving them the tools to get criminals off the streets. Last week we looked at how this law is helping to solve violent crimes. This week I'd like to discuss how it is also helping us close the files on difficult-to-solve property crimes.

The Missouri DNA Profiling System, which was successfully expanded in 2004 by a bill I sponsored, now requires DNA samples to be taken in all felony cases—dramatically expanding the number of samples the state crime lab has to check against evidence that has been collected from crimes scenes. These samples can be shared among police departments throughout the nation, via the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS).

As I said last week, the program has resulted in many positive matches for rape and homicide cases over the past year. However, in that same time period, DNA samples have resulted in matches for approximately 100 property-crime cases, including armed robbery, auto theft and burglary. These crimes would not have been solved under previous DNA testing guidelines.

Although this expanded profiling system has been a proven success, its funding is about to run out. The program is paid for with \$30 and \$15 court costs on certain criminal cases; however, those surcharges expire August 28. I am sponsoring legislation to remove that expiration date so we can continue to put these criminals behind bars. I am also pushing for additional funding so we can more quickly test the backlog of DNA samples we've collected from those convicted of felony crimes.

I am sure many people reading this have been victims of property crime. While the crime might not have harmed you physically, it does take away from your peace of mind. When others get into your personal possessions without consent, there is a terrible feeling that your privacy has been violated, and your sense of security is lost.

Fortunately, technology has advanced to the point that we can often get DNA evidence from a variety of sources at crime scenes. Blood, hair, saliva and skin cells can all be used to find DNA. Even if offenders walk away thinking they have committed the perfect crime, small amounts of evidence linking them to the crime scene can often be found, and the national DNA database links us to these individuals' past offenses.

The new program is giving law-enforcement agencies in Missouri the 21st-century tools needed to solve hard-to-break cases and is sending the message to criminals that if they break the law, they will be caught.

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 e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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