



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

**Column for Week of:  
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## **Legislation Bringing Two Additional Judges to 16<sup>th</sup> Circuit Aids Eastern Jackson County**

As eastern Jackson County grows and develops, citizen in our area are gaining new neighbors and businesses. Our schools continue to grow, and more services are available to us as new stores, restaurants and residential areas continue to spring up. While growth is a wonderful thing, a side effect of this development is increased strain on our court system.

It is important that Jackson County residents have timely access to the courts and that our law-enforcement personnel are able to promptly prosecute those accused of crime. That is why I am sponsoring legislation to add one new judge to the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit and transfer a judge from Kansas City to the Independence courthouse. This reorganization will make for more even caseloads for judges in our district.

The population in eastern Jackson County is growing as fast as any part of Missouri, including the St. Louis suburbs and Columbia. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Lee's Summit has grown from 46,535 in 1990 to 78,659 in 2004. Meanwhile, Blue Springs has grown from 40,650 in 1990 to 49,467 in 2004. Other communities would reflect similar rates of growth.

The Kansas City Star has reported that criminal cases in the 16<sup>th</sup> Circuit doubled and civil cases rose 5 percent from 2003 to 2004. And Jackson County judges averaged 3,247 case filings each in 2004, while St. Louis judges averaged 1,715. These numbers are reflected in the results of the findings of the Joint Interim Committee on Judicial Resources that I chaired during the summer of 2003.

These caseloads in Jackson County are overwhelming. Judges become backlogged and criminal cases slow down. My legislation to add one new judge to the Independence courthouse and move one from downtown Kansas City will shore up our resources at the courthouse and move cases through faster.

Eastern Jackson County has been in dire need of new judges for years. As the population continues to shift from Kansas City to the eastern suburbs, we would be wise to invest in new judges to better provide for our public safety.

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](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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