



SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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

Column for Week of:
April 10, 2006

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

Senate Ensures Missourians' Rights Over Insurance Companies

*Senate Votes Unanimously to Keep Insurance Companies from
Dropping Coverage or Raising Rates for Acts of God*

Mark Twain is quoted as saying, "Everybody talks about the weather, but nobody does anything about it." He might be pleased to know that in his home state of Missouri that is all changing. This week, the Missouri Senate voted unanimously to outlaw insurance companies from mistreating Missourians who have suffered property loss and damage due to the weather.

Senate Bill 895 was needed to protect those who have suffered once from weather-related damage to their homes and property from being hit again by unfair practices by some insurance companies. An amendment we voted to attach to SB 895 states that insurance companies will no longer be able to drop, refuse to write, refuse to renew or raise the rates of any Missourian who inquires or files an insurance claim for property damaged by bad weather.

The most alarming example of how this policy is implemented by certain insurance companies is that some people have been penalized simply for inquiring about whether a certain loss was covered and at what level. SB 895 will stop this practice. This action by the Senate is especially important in light of the hundreds of Missouri homes damaged by storms and tornadoes this spring. The weather is out of anyone's control. Thus, it is unfair for insurance companies to raise rates or cancel policies for asking about filing a claim for weather-related damage.

We all need to have insurance on our homes in case of bad weather, fire or other loss. Those who faithfully pay their premiums month after month are buying the confidence that should something go wrong, their loss will be covered. These consumers should be able to expect similar good faith dealings from their insurance companies. Having your policy cancelled or rates increased for a simple inquiry or an act of nature beyond your control is not fair. The Senate will continue to work to give the bill addressing this situation final approval and get it signed into law.

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.