



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

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Column for Week of:  
July 10, 2006

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## Combating Identity Theft

In the “information age,” there are few things more important than the protection of one’s personal identity. Hundreds of Missourians know all too well the results of having their credit card number, Social Security number or other personal information stolen and used by criminals. The hassle, expense and damage to a person’s credit history can be tremendous due to even a single instance of identity theft.

In recent years, the number of reported cases of identity theft has skyrocketed as thieves invent new methods to capture and misuse the personal information of others. But Missouri is fighting back with tough new laws to crack down on these unscrupulous individuals.

In 2004 and 2005, the Legislature passed bills substantially increasing penalties for identity theft. In 2005, Sen. Bartle was the Senate handler of legislation that targeted the most egregious cases of identity theft.

Under the new laws, stricter penalties are enforced for the following offenses:

- **Loss of up to \$500:** This new law takes a hard stance against cases that result in relatively minor amounts of financial loss. It is a Class A misdemeanor punishable by up to one year in jail.
- **Loss between \$500 and \$5,000:** Class C felony punishable by one to seven years in prison.
- **Loss between \$5,000 and \$50,000:** Class B felony punishable by five to 15 years in prison.
- **Loss over \$50,000:** Class A felony punishable by 10 to 30 years in prison.
- **Civil Damages:** In addition to criminal penalties, thieves are now civilly liable and can be sued for three times the amount of damages or up to \$5,000, whichever is greater.

- **Restitution:** A court can order restitution be made to victims, including costs to clear their credit histories and attorney fees.

These new laws are working to reduce identity theft by imposing stronger penalties against criminals and giving victims greater means of retrieving their losses.

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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