

# **Report from Senator David G. Klindt**

## *March 16, 2006*

### ***Sweeping ethics reform***

This week the Missouri Senate passed and sent to the House of Representatives the most sweeping ethics reform bill in a very long time.

Today's legislators inherited a system of campaign finance reporting and lobbying laws that were badly in need of an update. SB 1254, sponsored by Senator Charlie Shields of St. Joseph, brings our ethics laws into the modern world.

The bill removes the arcane campaign contribution limits to individual candidates and replaces the limits with immediate transparency and full, timely reporting. The limits were advertised as a way to get money out of politics, but that was false advertising, for sure. The only thing the contribution limits accomplished was to funnel the money into the political system through avenues that are harder or even impossible for voters to track.

The new system, if adopted by the House, will make it much easier for voters to figure out which candidates are getting how much money from various contributors. This is an excellent step forward that I have advocated for years.

The bill also prohibits candidates and incumbents from raising campaign funds during the legislative session and updates several provisions governing the lobbying process in Jefferson City. New reporting requirements will make the activities of lobbyists easier to follow.

Also this week, the Senate Agriculture Committee voted to send SB 1009 (my "seed bill" I wrote about last week) to the Senate floor for passage. This is an important piece of legislation designed to make sure our regulations of seeds remain uniform across the state. Without this protection, farmers could be zoned out of business by local governments acting on emotion instead of science.

We need to continue to send a very clear message that Missouri is very open to biotechnology, because not only will farmers continue to have the ability to produce food, but we will also be able to heal people through plant-made pharmaceuticals.

The opponents of this common sense approach, including the Sierra Club, have been running around the capitol squealing about the loss of local control. A respected agricultural economist at the University of Missouri responds to all this squealing with a very good question: "Would you let every municipality decide which side of the road we should drive on?"

Another important bill to emerge from committee this week is SB 1104 from Senator John Cauthorn. This bill clarifies current law to make sure biodiesel incentive funds go only to entities that are majority-owned by Missouri farmers. We don't need to be sending our tax dollars to other states or other countries.

The Missouri General Assembly will be off on Spring Break this week, so there will be no report next week. Instead, let's all enjoy the peace and quiet!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David G. Studd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "D".