

Report from Senator David G. Klindt

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Easier to vote; harder to cheat

This week the Missouri Senate took a giant leap in the direction of more honest and reliable elections by passing the "Missouri Voter Protection Act." The bill makes it easier for Missourians to vote, but harder for anyone to cheat.

If this bill is finally passed into law and signed by the governor, we can all have greater confidence in the election process by requiring voters to show government-issued photo identification at the polls. Only those over 65 and disabled Missourians who are homebound are exempt.

More than 95 percent of all Missouri voters already carry a suitable photo ID, such as a driver's license. Those who don't already have one will be issued one free of charge.

It's all about making sure people are who they say they are when they show up to vote. This isn't much of a problem in the rural areas I represent, since we all pretty much know each other. But in the urban areas, our lax voter identification laws have led to abuse. In 2000, at least 1,500 fraudulent ballots cast in the St. Louis area, including 14 dead people who "voted." That's indefensible. The honest votes cast by folks in the Great Northwest should not be cancelled out by the votes of dead people in St. Louis, or any city.

The Missouri Voter Protection Act also stops the paying of bounties to voter registration "hired guns." This will get rid of the financial incentives that have led to such ridiculous things as voter registration cards filled out in the names of dead people, dogs, and comic book characters.

In a nutshell, if Rin Tin Tin shows up to vote this fall, he'd better have a photo ID!

We also this week voted to stop illegal immigrants from using up the education and healthcare tax dollars intended for hard-working Missourians. This bill prevents people who are in the country illegally from receiving any taxpayer-funded assistance. It also cracks down on employers who hire illegal workers. Anyone with a government contract who knowingly hires undocumented workers would be prosecuted, lose the contract and be banned from bidding on other projects for three years.

Its tough medicine, but necessary. The population of illegal immigrants in Missouri is estimated at 55,000 – an increase of 450 percent in just 15 years! The bill now moves to the House.

Another bill we moved along this week, and is very close to final passage, is the ethanol mandate. This bill will move Missouri in the direction of energy independence and boost the rural economy at the same time. The bill requires all regular fuel sold in Missouri to be blended with ethanol, as long as the blended fuel doesn't cost more than regular gasoline. Premium fuels are exempt.

This bill will let us rely less on Big Oil and more on our corn-producing neighbors. That's good policy.

