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that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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Senate Approves Bill to Pay Wrongly Convicted Inmates for Lost Time

Bill Makes Payments to Those Exonerated by DNA a Priority

JEFFERSON CITY, MO. – Inmates who are exonerated by a DNA test and proved actually innocent, but who fell outside the current timeframe set by law, are one step closer to seeing some financial relief for their years of wrongful imprisonment. The Senate approved Senate Bill 1023 today, sponsored by Senate President Pro Tem Michael R. Gibbons, R-Kirkwood. The measure creates a new line item in the state budget to pay wrongly convicted men and women rather than having them compete for the same funds that provide for DNA tests of inmates.

Gibbons said three innocent people exonerated years ago have not received any form of compensation from the state of Missouri for the lost years of their lives.

“The state made a mistake,” Gibbons said. “And it is finally time that the state takes responsibility and sees that these three men, and any others who were wrongly imprisoned, be repaid for the loss of their liberty.”

One of the state’s more high-profile exoneration cases involved Steve Toney who spent 13 years and 10 months in prison convicted of a rape he did not commit. Toney was exonerated in 1996 by DNA evidence, but has not received any compensation from the state. Toney, as well as two others, were never paid because a previous law exempts anyone exonerated by DNA before Aug. 28, 2003.

“It is indefensible that a man lost almost 14 years of his life serving a sentence for a crime he did not commit, and the state of Missouri has not repaid him,” Gibbons said. “This bill will make those payments a priority rather than an afterthought like they currently are.”

In 2003, Missouri adopted a compensation plan to pay those found actually innocent as a result of DNA exonerations the sum of \$50 per day for each day of wrongful imprisonment. The total is paid in annual payments not to exceed \$36,500 until the total due is paid. The state estimates the three innocent men are owed a total of \$875,000 in compensation.

The bill must receive a second round of approval before advancing to the House.

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