



Gibbons Capitol Report  
June 1, 2006

### **Saving Lives on Missouri's Highways**

Last Friday the SITE Improvement Association and members of Laborers' Union Local 110 held a press conference along Interstate 44 in Eureka in support of legislation I sponsored that increases penalties for drivers who speed through work zones. The message and bill are important. Too many construction workers, law enforcement officers and emergency responders have lost their lives to inattentive and reckless drivers on Missouri roads. That is why the Missouri General Assembly passed a comprehensive highway safety bill that will stiffen penalties for drivers who fail to move over for emergency vehicles or commit offenses in a highway work zones.

### **Dangerous Jobs**

Four highway patrol officers have been killed while working traffic in the past four years. The statistics are even more alarming for highway construction workers. Between 1999 and 2003, there were nearly 6,000 injuries and 97 deaths that occurred in Missouri highway work zone crashes. Three MoDOT employees were killed and 69 were injured in work zones in 2004. And just last week, Jeffrey Staley of Caseyville was killed when a truck went into a work zone and struck him on the shoulder where he was putting decals on a guardrail. He was working on Interstate 55 when the truck hit him and two of his co-workers.

### **Record Amount of Construction**

The Missouri Department of Transportation will see a \$400 million increase from federal funds and the redirection of funds from the passage of Amendment III in the coming fiscal year that begins July 1. More funding will bring safer highways to Missouri, but not without construction. The state reports that there is a record number of work zones this year with 1,200 statewide. The good news is that our highways will be smoother and safer, but it also means drivers will need to be more careful.

### **Move Over**

I sponsored Senate Bill 872 that was originally known as the "Move Over" bill. Although the bill grew to include other provisions including booster seat requirements, it's main impetus was to better protect law enforcement officers, emergency responders and construction workers from drivers who don't slow down. The bill stiffens penalties for drivers who fail to move over and slow down when they approach emergency responders

on Missouri's roads and highways by increasing the penalty from a Class B misdemeanor to a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to a year in jail or a maximum fine of \$1,000 or both. Highway patrolmen and emergency responders work everyday to protect our lives: We need to do what we can to protect theirs.

### **Work Zone Penalties**

Also included in the bill is legislation pertaining to highway work zone safety. State Sen. Delbert Scott sponsored this portion of the highway safety bill. The measure increases a number of penalties for people who drive recklessly or endanger the life of highway workers while driving through a work zone. Motorists convicted of speeding, passing another vehicle when workers are present or failing to stay in the proper lane will be punished more severely. Each offense results in a \$1,000 fine and four points against the driver's license.

We want drivers to help keep officers and emergency responders safe and alive by slowing down, staying alert, and moving over when they see emergency lights on the road. We also want drivers to slow down in work zones and keep construction workers safe. This bill is a concentrated effort to get drivers to slow down and save lives. The bill is on the governor's desk, and we hope he signs it into law.