



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

Frank A. Barnitz
16th Senate District

CAPITOL BUILDING, ROOM 425
JEFFERSON CITY, MO 65101

For Immediate Release:
April 28, 2006

Contact: Shelly St. Clair
(573) 751-2108

Ten Days and Counting...

JEFFERSON CITY – Only 10 days of session are left in this legislative year, and while lots of business still needs to be finalized, new ideas are still surfacing.

Some of the issues that have been heard quite a bit in the media have yet to be taken up by the Missouri Senate, including the infamous eminent domain bill. The version that came from the House has been scrutinized significantly by senators, organizations, the public and lobbyists. Some claim it is too restrictive, while others believe it is not tough enough. I believe that, as it is now, the bill (House Bill 1944) will be a lawyer's dream for litigation. Let's remember that our property rights, which have been chipped away at, are what we're supposed to be protecting. The Senate will be deliberating on eminent domain next week.

The Missouri Higher Education Loan Authority (commonly known as MOHELA) is another issue that has not yet been taken up. This is also known as the Lewis and Clark Discovery Initiative. The act would be used for capital improvements, such as buildings and equipment, on our campuses of higher education. If we're going to discuss this initiative, it is my intention to try and secure funds necessary for the University of Missouri-Rolla and Linn State Technical College. Both campuses have worked diligently to provide facilities, which promote the best education, with the most up-to-date equipment with which to train students.

Missouri's budget is nearly complete after many weeks of deliberation. As a whole, the budget will help provide services that I have heard many of you say are important. An increase in pay for state workers, who have not had a raise in several years, was one of the areas on which I received comments. Expect to see funding increases for education, meals-on-wheels programs, and veterans' homes, just to name a few others.

The 10-percent ethanol fuel standard for all Missouri gas also passed this week. This will help us in many ways. Ethanol is cheaper to produce and cleaner burning than gasoline. It also provides jobs in Missouri, supports Missouri farmers, and decreases our dependency on foreign oil. Let's hope now that the big oil companies will pass along the savings.

A bill that I am opposed to, which passed this week, is the voter ID bill. It states that, by November 2008, those under 65 will have to have a picture ID issued by the Missouri Department of Revenue in order to vote. Those who do not have an ID between now and 2008 can only vote on Election Day with a provisional ballot. A provisional ballot is counted only after a county clerk verifies that the signature on the ballot is consistent with the voter's signature when he or she registered.

I don't know about you, but my writing and the way I sign my name is different now than when I was 18 years old. Let's not even speak to the cost that each county may have to bear — costs that are not reimbursable by the state. All of this comes at a time in our history when Americans are voting less than ever before. It sure seems to me that this is just one more hoop that people will have to go through to be sure that their votes count.

New additions to my Senate website are streaming, podcast, and archived audio. I encourage you to visit my website, www.senate.mo.gov/barnitz, and get more information on legislation that could affect you. As always, I welcome comments and concerns. Feel free to stop by my Capitol office in Jefferson City, room 425. The mailing address is 201 W. Capitol Ave., Room 425, Jefferson City, MO 65101. My office telephone number is (573) 751-2108, and my e-mail is frank.barnitz@senate.mo.gov.

###