



# THE STOUFFER REPORT

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**Capitol Building, Room 332**  
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## Fee Offices Deserve Careful Examination

People dread going to the local license office to get their driver's licenses or renew license plates on their automobiles, boats or recreational vehicles. For 12 years, under previous administrations, most of us went to the same place and talked with the same people every year. Since political parties changed in the Governor's office in 2005, many of us have seen a change in license-fee offices. In the past year and a half, these fee offices have become a major topic of discussion.

In Missouri prior to 1927, fee offices were not privatized, but today it is considered a longstanding practice. Until 2005, there were still 11 fee offices run by the state. However, Gov. Blunt's administration found it would save the state more than \$7 million by privatizing these fee offices as well.

As a result, Missouri's 183 fee offices are currently run by private individuals. Appointed by the governor, they must follow state regulations and remain accountable to the Missouri Department of Revenue. Due to Gov. Blunt's changes to the system, license offices have expanded hours, improved efficiency and saved taxpayer dollars. Nevertheless, the system has come under some scrutiny due to the bipartisan practice of rewarding political supporters with fee-office positions.

As a result, five lawmakers recently released a plan to restructure the current system. Their new plan is meant to help end the perception that license offices are designed to reward political backers, instead of serving the public. Under the plan, fee-office positions would instead go to nonprofit groups, civic or business associations, or local governments. The plan also would waive license fees for customers who wait in line for more than 30 minutes, and it would limit the salaries of fee-office employees to \$100,000 a year. It also would allow the state auditor to annually audit license offices, which the auditor currently cannot do.

I support all efforts to improve how our state functions; however, this plan demands to be fully examined. We must not forget why these offices were privatized in the first place — to save taxpayer dollars and improve efficiency. I am confident lawmakers and statewide officials will be able to work together to ensure all sides are satisfied with how Missouri fee offices are run.

I also welcome your comments on this important issue.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by email at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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