



MISSOURI SENATE

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Sen. Crowell Introduces Legislation Protecting Missouri Reporters and Sources

JEFFERSON CITY—Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau, this week introduced legislation protecting journalists' confidential sources.

Senate Bill 1013, in a balanced approach, will help shield reporters from being forced to reveal the identities of confidential sources, and it also prohibits the disclosure of unpublished or non-broadcast information such as notes, outtakes, tapes or other data.

“Citizens have a right to know when they are being exploited or when authority figures are abusing their power, but sometimes the only way for a reporter to get that information to the public is to offer anonymity to knowledgeable sources,” Crowell said. “Reporters should not be punished by the courts for upholding their commitment to confidentiality.”

The shield law would cover any person or entity that disseminates information to the public by way of a newspaper, book, magazine, pamphlet or other periodical, radio or television broadcast, or through a news agency, wire service or news syndicate. The privilege is divested if the court determines that the information sought is not required to be kept secret under federal or state law and cannot be obtained from any other source, or if it is essential to the protection of the public interest.

“Without this shield law, whistleblowers will be discouraged from coming forward, and the free flow of information will suffer from a chilling effect,” Crowell said.

SB 1013 will soon be heard in committee. Upon committee approval, the measure will return to the Senate floor for debate by the entire body.