



## MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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**A Weekly Column for the  
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# Funeral Protest Ban

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JEFFERSON CITY – One of the first pieces of legislation approved by the Missouri General Assembly this year was a bill to ban the picketing and protesting of funeral services. The ban was prompted by a protest at the funeral services of a US Army Specialist killed in action last summer in Iraq.

Senate Bill 578, named the Specialist Edward Lee Myers Act, makes it illegal for people to picket or otherwise protest near any church, cemetery or funeral home within an hour prior to a funeral service, and until an hour following the end of the ceremony. The measure makes every day that a violation occurs a separate misdemeanor offense.

Members of a fringe religious group from Topeka, Kansas staged a protest at the funeral services for Spc. Myers last summer in St. Joseph. While the protesters were not allowed on church grounds, funeral service officials noted it was impossible for arriving mourners not to notice and become distracted and disturbed by the demonstrators amassing within eyesight and earshot of the church.

A St. Joseph resident, Spc. Myers died in service to his country on his second tour of duty in Iraq, leaving behind his wife, their two children and countless other family members and friends. Myers was just 21 years old.

A number of states have passed similar funeral protest prohibitions, and last month Congress approved legislation barring demonstrators from disrupting military funerals at national cemeteries.

The federal bill, like the one signed by Governor Blunt, specifically targets the Kansas church group that has been staging protests at military funerals across the country.

In response to the protests by the Westboro Baptist Church, the Patriot Guard Riders, a motorcycle group that includes many veterans, has been appearing at military funerals in Missouri and elsewhere to pay their respects and protect the families from demonstrations.

Republicans and Democrats in the Missouri General Assembly supported SB 578 and its swift passage because they understand the need to make sure that those laid to rest may be eulogized, mourned and remembered in an environment of peace, respect and compassion.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: [delbertscott@senate.mo.gov](mailto:delbertscott@senate.mo.gov).

*Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.*