



Chris Koster
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Koster Advances Bills Improving Child-Safety and Governmental Ethics

JEFFERSON CITY—Two measures sponsored by Sen. Chris Koster, R-Cass, received final approval from the Missouri Senate this week.

The first measure, sponsored by Koster, strengthens the safety-restraint laws for children riding in cars. Current Missouri law requires children younger than 4 to ride in safety seats, and children older than 4 to be secured by a seatbelt. However, studies suggest small children are not properly protected by a seatbelt alone. In fact, because seatbelts are designed for adults, children can often be injured by the seatbelt itself.

Senate Bill 916 requires most children between 4 and 7 to ride with a booster seat, which improves the effectiveness of seatbelts. Similar legislation has been passed in 34 other states, and the federal government will provide nearly a million dollars a year in additional funding if the bill is successful. It is estimated that Koster's legislation could save the lives of more than 30 children a year, and would reduce a child's risk of injury by 59 percent.

"Missouri's law is outdated, and research confirms that booster seats save lives. Now is the time to make our law reflect the value we place on the safety of our children," Koster said.

Another significant piece of House-bound legislation that Koster backed reforms Missouri's campaign-finance and ethics in government laws.

Senate Bill 1254 prohibits lawmakers, their families and legislative staff from accepting paid travel, lodging or entertainment expenditures unless the disbursement was approved by a legislative committee. The measure also blocks campaign fundraising during the legislative session, and requires more frequent campaign-finance disclosures.

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“When I came to the Senate 15 months ago, I became immediately concerned that the cozy relationship between lobbyists and elected officials had gone too far. This bill ends much of the gift giving that is commonplace in Jefferson City,” Koster said. “My hope is that this legislation will bring down the curtain on such flagrant gift giving.”

Both bills will be considered by the House once the Legislature returns from its annual mid-session break on March 27.

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