



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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Sen. Koster Plays Key Role in Success of Eminent Domain Bill

JEFFERSON CITY — Sen. Chris Koster, R-Harrisonville, was instrumental in the General Assembly's decision last week to send to the governor legislation putting an end to eminent domain abuse in Missouri. House Bill 1944, which Koster handled in the Senate, addresses the problems created by the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling last year that declared governments can seize private property for economic purposes, such as an increase in tax revenue or job growth.

"The homes and farms of hardworking Missouri families should not be bulldozed just so a shopping center can take their place," Koster said. "However, reform cannot risk our obligation to provide vital infrastructures like roads, water, and electricity."

Koster spent the weekend before the debate meeting with interested parties and attempting to find a balance in their numerous positions. Individuals from the Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Chamber of Commerce, as well as business and city leaders, met with Koster throughout the weekend to help find a compromise.

Ultimately, Koster was able to craft a bill that received strong endorsements across the board. The letters of endorsement were circulated throughout the Capitol and represented a diverse group of landowners, cities and developers.

HB 1944 prohibits eminent domain from being used in projects solely for economic development. The measure further delineates that when eminent domain is used for truly public purposes, such as improving utilities or building a new road, property owners will be paid based on several factors including heritage value, fair market value, willingness of the owner to sell the property and the costs of relocation and replacement. Among its other provisions, the bill also shields farmland from being labeled as "blighted."

Further, the bill provides an additional 25 percent reimbursement for seizures that include an individual's residence. Any governmental entity seeking to take land within 300 feet of a person's home would be required to pay the increased rate under the Homestead Takings requirements.

“Property owners can be reassured that their state legislators in the House and Senate have taken a stand to protect property rights and turn away from those who prefer the status quo,” said Charlie Kruse, President of the Missouri Farm Bureau. “We appreciate the commitment of Representative Steve Hobbs, Senator Chris Koster and Senate and House leadership as well as the support of Governor Matt Blunt.”

HB 1944 now awaits the governor's signature before it will become law.

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