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## **Senator Rupp Working to Improve Court System in Lincoln County**

JEFFERSON CITY — Sen. Scott T. Rupp, R-Wentzville, this week introduced legislation adding a circuit judge position in the 45<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit, which covers Lincoln and Pike counties. Senate Bill 434 was introduced on the Senate floor Monday, Feb. 5.

“The population increase in Lincoln County is stretching our justice system beyond capacity,” Rupp said. “Including an additional circuit judge will help ease the burden and improve services to our citizens.”

Lincoln County is growing faster than all but one other Missouri county, and the population in the 45<sup>th</sup> Circuit has increased by 23 percent since 2000. The 45<sup>th</sup> Circuit has the ninth highest population per circuit judge in the state of Missouri, with 66,489 people for its only presiding judge.

Court filings are up 32 percent since 2000, including a 51 percent rise in felony filings. Lincoln County is already planning to construct an additional building at the county justice center to increase courtroom space.

The 45<sup>th</sup> Circuit has relied on help from a number of judges to help with daily business. Pike County Associate Circuit Judge David Ash is serving as the 45<sup>th</sup> Circuit’s drug court judge, and several judges from other circuits visit regularly to handle court dockets.

“It is unacceptable that the 45<sup>th</sup> Circuit is falling so far behind,” Rupp said. “Public officials serve at the will of the people, and we cannot afford to fail them.”

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