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## **Senate Preserves Right of Self-Defense by Approving “Castle Doctrine”**

JEFFERSON CITY — Missourians recently took a step toward improved safety and self-defense rights with Senate approval of the “Castle Doctrine.” Under Senate Bill 62, which the Senate approved on March 6, Missouri property owners are allowed to use deadly force to defend themselves against unlawful intruders. This legislation offers needed legal protections to Missourians and sends a message to would-be criminals.

Currently in Missouri, property owners must establish that an intruder means to do them bodily harm before they can use appropriate force to defend themselves. In other words, if someone breaks into your home, you have to wait for the intruder to attack you before you can defend your family and property. The “Castle Doctrine” strengthens the rights of property owners by allowing them to use force to remove the perpetrator before it is too late.

SB 62 changes current law by creating the presumption that criminals who unlawfully break into your home or vehicle intend to do you harm. Property owners will have no duty to retreat from the intruder. Also under the bill, Missourians who use deadly force against individuals unlawfully entering their home or vehicle are exempt from criminal prosecution and civil lawsuits. These provisions do not apply if suspected perpetrators have a right to be on the premises or if the individual using deadly force is engaged in illegal activity.

This measure returns to citizens their right to protect life and property and puts criminals on notice that their crimes are unacceptable. As a husband and father, I feel that unlawfully entering someone else’s home is a threatening act of aggression that warrants self-defense. Missourians should have the right to defend themselves and their families without fear of criminal prosecution, and this measure guarantees that right. By modifying state law to protect victims, not criminals, we are also sending a message that Missouri does not tolerate dangerous and unlawful behavior.

If you have comments or questions about this week’s column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

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