



Senate Approves Legislation Protecting the Public and Upholding Our Rights

JEFFERSON CITY — In the final week before the Legislature's spring recess, senators were able to advance to the House two measures improving public safety in Missouri. The Senate approved a resolution modifying the Constitution to better identify sex offenders and legislation preserving Missourians' constitutional rights during emergencies.

Senate Joint Resolution 9 corrects a legal loophole affecting the state sex offender registry. The resolution asks voters to modify a constitutional provision prohibiting state laws from applying retroactively. In June, the Missouri Supreme Court ruled that because of the provision, sex offenders convicted prior to Jan. 1, 1995, do not have to be included in the statewide sex offender registry. That is the date Missouri began requiring registration.

This measure upholds the original intent of Megan's Law, which requires Missouri sex offenders to register with their local sheriff's departments. The Supreme Court ruling takes a large number of offenders off the state registry and undermines the spirit of a measure passed to protect our children.

Senators also advanced a measure allowing Missourians to properly protect themselves during disasters. Senate Bill 257 preserves Missourians' Second Amendment rights during emergency situations. Under the legislation, state and local governments cannot prohibit or restrict the lawful possession, transfer, sale, transportation, storage, display, or use of firearms or ammunition during emergencies.

Natural disasters and emergencies are often the times when Missourians most need protection — and when law-enforcement officials are most overburdened. SB 257 ensures Missourians will be able to protect themselves.

Together, these measures will uphold our rights and improve public safety for all Missourians. I look forward to returning to Jefferson City after the spring recess to continue working to send these and other needed bills to the governor for final approval.

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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