



Pending Priorities

JEFFERSON CITY — I've recently pre-filed a number of pieces of legislation aimed at making the lives of the people of the 2nd Senatorial District and the state better. Last week, I told you about one of my priorities, [Senate Bill 858](#), a measure to address the illegal immigration problem in this state. This week, I'd like to talk about a couple more measures I hope will be getting approval by the Legislature in this coming session — a bill to add another judge to the 45th Judicial Circuit Court, which covers Lincoln and Pike counties, and another bill to require that records follow a teacher when he or she goes from district to district.

[Senate Bill 769](#) would create an additional circuit judge position for the 45th circuit and is similar to a bill I introduced last session. Lincoln County is growing faster than all but one other county in the state, with the 45th Circuit's population growing by 23 percent in the last seven years. An amazing more than 66,000 people are served by just one presiding judge... the ninth biggest population per circuit judge in Missouri, pushing the judicial system to the max. Adding just one more circuit judge will ease the 45th Circuit Court's burden. The court has seen filings rise by nearly a third since 2000, including a 51 percent rise in felony filings. The court has received some help from several judges who have pitched in on the daily business. But it's time we recognize there needs to be a permanent fix.

[Senate Bill 844](#) would require school districts to request a prospective teacher's personnel file from any previous school of employment prior to offering that applicant a job. A school district that receives such a request must send it within three days. We have to make it clear that teachers who have broken the law or have been dismissed because of poor performance cannot just hop from district to district with no accountability trail. You wouldn't want to hire an employee without knowing that person's employment history. Why shouldn't we expect at least the same from the people we trust to help educate our children?

These are just a couple of my legislative priorities in the coming session. We will discuss more of the measures you and I consider important as we move closer to session and into the 2008 legislative year.

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.