



MISSOURI SENATE

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Senate Rules Committee Fails to Reject Pay Increases, Leaving Sen. Engler Perturbed

JEFFERSON CITY— Sen. Kevin Engler, R-Farmington, expressed his frustration this week after a measure similar to one he introduced protecting the integrity of public service was prematurely killed in a Senate committee.

Sen. Luann Ridgeway, R-Smithville, brought House Concurrent Resolution 13 before the committee, but no one seconded the motion to discuss the bill. This means the resolution, which would have rejected the recommendations by a citizens commission to give all judges, statewide elected officials and lawmakers significant pay raises, will go no further. Engler's own legislation, Senate Concurrent Resolution 3, was also never brought up for a vote.

"I realize that to many legislators this is a job and their only source of income, but we are all first and foremost public servants," Engler said. "That is why I'm disappointed that the will of the people has been disregarded."

In November, Missouri voters approved a misleadingly worded amendment that allowed lawmakers to move forward with recommendations from the Missouri Citizens Commission on the Compensation of Elected Officials to give elected officials, including themselves, pay increases without being held accountable.

The commission recently approved a plan to increase judges' salaries by \$1,200, plus 4 percent, beginning July 1, 2007, and the same increase for legislators beginning Jan. 1, 2009. The commission also recommended that judges and elected officials receive whatever pay increase other state employees are given in the future. A two-thirds vote of the Legislature would have rejected the plan. But full consideration by the Senate and House is out of the question since the bill did not make it through committee.

"Although the \$3.15 million salary increase is just a fraction of the overall budget, I believe it sends the wrong message to our constituents," Engler said. "A salary increase just does not rank high on my list of priorities when compared to funding our schools or providing health care to those without coverage."

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