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Methamphetamine Registry is a New Tool in the War on Drugs

Missouri has for years been the leader in methamphetamine lab busts, and lawmakers have been working on solutions to the problems stemming from the addictive drug. Although recent legislative efforts have resulted in fewer meth lab incidents, Missouri's problem with methamphetamine addiction most certainly has not been cured. I recently introduced legislation establishing a meth registry in Missouri that will inform citizens of the threats posed by addicts and toxic meth labs in their communities.

Missouri is unparalleled in the number of meth lab busts recorded by law enforcement. Although new policies dramatically reduced the number of meth lab incidents in 2006 compared to the year before, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Missouri still leads the nation in incidents. To further limit the prevalence of meth labs in our communities, I am proposing an Internet registry that would make available to the public the names and birth dates of convicted meth cooks and their counties of offense.

Home labs pose serious risks to neighbors and the officers who make arrests and clean up the sites. Methamphetamine labs are extremely toxic and prone to dangerous explosions due to the harsh chemicals used in producing the drug. Meanwhile, recidivism is high among meth addicts. As such, citizens and law enforcers need to be informed of the criminal history of convicted meth producers in their communities.

Statewide registries have already been implemented in Illinois, Minnesota, Montana and Tennessee. Six other states are considering registries. Tennessee officials have said their registry has been a key reason why meth incidents are dropping in their state. As the nation's leader in meth lab incidents, the time has come for Missouri to create a registry of its own.

In the war on methamphetamine, we need to arm citizens and law enforcement with information. By alerting communities to the dangerous meth offenders living among them, we can help reduce the reach and impact of this dangerous drug.

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 e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278.

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