



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8** – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101

**Column for Week of:**  
**June 4, 2007**

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## **Legislature Passes Bills to Protect Nursing Home Residents**

*Measure Expanding Tax Credits for Senior Citizens Also Gains Passage*

In the early morning hours of last November 27<sup>th</sup> the residents of the Anderson Guest House in Southwest Missouri awoke to find their home engulfed in flames. One woman, believed to be a worker, was dragged kicking and screaming from the home, not wanting to leave until all the residents had been found. Others worked in vain, repeatedly going back into the building. When it was all over, 10 residents and one worker were killed making the fire one of the worst in state history.

Investigators looking into the cause of the fire believe it was some type of electrical short that started it. The facility was not required to have sprinklers. It had been “grandfathered” in as a place that had been operating before 1980 and was not required to have that safeguard – a safeguard that might have saved the lives of countless others.

This session the legislature passed a bill that was just recently signed into law by Governor Blunt. This bill requires sprinklers in new facilities, sets standards for putting sprinklers into existing facilities, improves fire alarm systems, and increases fire safety education and planning. HB 952 will make sure all new or upgraded long-term care facilities will install and maintain commercial-grade sprinkler systems. Those already existing facilities with more than 20 residents that don’t currently meet National Fire Protection Association standards will have to install residential-grade sprinklers. We know this is not a cost-free proposition for these homes, so a low-interest loan program has been established to help them meet the 2012 deadline. This new law will give those who live in these facilities and their families a little peace of mind.

Other measures important to one’s peace of mind at home are the Homestead Tax Credit and the Missouri Property Tax Credit, more commonly known as the “Circuit Breaker” tax credit. These are tax breaks for elderly homeowners to keep increases to their property taxes in check. The legislature worked this year to increase the numbers of those eligible for the Circuit Breaker tax credit. For next year, we raised the maximum income level from \$25,000 a year to \$27,500, and the minimum income level was raised from \$13,000 to \$14,300. You can get either the Homestead or Circuit Breaker credit each year but not both. Contact the Missouri Department of Revenue at PO Box 478, Jefferson City, MO 65105-0478 for more information. You can also get help by calling toll-free 1-800-877-6881 or going to DOR’s website: [www.dor.mo.gov](http://www.dor.mo.gov). Remember, you must apply for the credit each year. Don’t assume that if you got it last year, it would be automatically applied this year.

These are just a couple of measures we worked on during the past legislative session that are designed to help our senior citizens. 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](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.