



## **SENATOR MATT BARTLE**

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### **In the face of Difficulties, Think of Your Blessings on this Thanksgiving Day**

JEFFERSON CITY — It must be human nature to focus on the negatives and overlook too many of the positives. The difficulties in life demand our attention while the blessings are easy to take for granted. Just tune into the news this week and the big story is how awful travel will be in our nation's airports – not of how millions of Americans will get to spend a long weekend with loved ones.

As 2007 enters its waning days, we reflect back on the events of this year. Many of our countrymen have suffered great disasters. Our neighbors to the west in Greensburg, Kansas saw their entire town destroyed by a massive tornado. Fires in San Diego, the droughts in Georgia, and the devastating cyclone in Bangladesh have grabbed the headlines. Meanwhile our brave men and women of the U.S. military continue to wage a necessary and noble but difficult war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yet, a look at our own history reveals that our tradition of Thanksgiving Day, a holiday that reflects something of the core of who we are as Americans, was not born in peaceful times. To the contrary, it has always been a reflection of the good that we find during troubled times — a day to express our gratitude to God for His continuing goodness through difficulty, not for the absence of difficulty.

What we celebrate as Thanksgiving is traditionally tied to a three-day feast hosted by the Pilgrims after their first harvest in 1621. After a long winter claimed many lives in the Pilgrims' first year at Plymouth Colony, they nevertheless held a celebration to give thanks for God's blessings. The colonists invited Native Americans from the surrounding areas and enjoyed a feast together.

The Pilgrims held a day of thanksgiving again in 1623. After that, a tradition began in Plymouth and other New England colonies of setting aside a day to give thanks for the autumn harvest.

During the difficult days of the Revolutionary War, the Continental Congress appointed one or more Thanksgiving days each year except for 1777. In that year, General George Washington declared the holiday in December as a victory celebration for the defeat of the British at Saratoga. Washington again issued proclamations of the Thanksgiving holiday in 1789 and 1795, this time as the president of a young nation.

However, it was not until another war, one with an equally important effect on the development of our nation, that Thanksgiving Day was proclaimed a national holiday. Abraham Lincoln issued the

proclamation on Oct. 3, 1863, citing “the blessings of fruitful fields and healthful skies” amid a “civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity.”

None of us can tell what the rest of this year will bring or what 2008 may hold in store. There may be difficult days, but it is also true that good days await us. Without looking very hard, we can all find many things for which to be thankful. For starters, we are all Americans. We live in the most prosperous society in history and we have liberties and opportunities that are the envy of the rest of the world. This Thanksgiving, let’s focus on God’s blessings of life and liberty, of family and friends, and of the privilege we have of living in this land of plenty.

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>.