

Senator Luann Ridgeway's Capitol Report

**MO Senate Now In Session
January 31, 2007**

Filibuster and Public Service Announcement

Recently the Missouri Senate set a record. I don't know if it's one to be proud of or not, but nonetheless, it was a record. On Thursday, when legislators are usually traveling from Jefferson City to their homes, we found ourselves in the middle of a filibuster. This meant we were stuck in the capitol for the duration.

A filibuster is a continuous speech on the part of one or more Senators. If you've seen Jimmy Stewart in "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington", you've seen a filibuster. A filibuster is used to prevent a given issue from going to a vote. It is one of the many checks and balances in our system to ensure that the views of a minority of senators are not ignored.

There was only one Senator conducting this filibuster. He had to continue to talk or else he would lose his right to continue. The only relief he had was when a quorum call by roll call vote was taken. While the roll call vote was being taken, the filibustering senator had a very brief opportunity (about 3 minutes) to get to the bathroom and grab a bite to eat.

The filibuster began around 10:15 a.m. on Thursday morning and lasted 17 hours. He kept going until sometime between 3:30 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. on Friday morning.

The filibuster was a result of Senator Bartle's opposition to the appointment of Warren Erdman to the University of Missouri Board of Curators. The Senate has to confirm all such appointments. Senator Bartle disagrees with Mr. Erdman on the issue of stem cell research and also believed that Mr. Erdman had been inappropriately involved in his primary election race last year. The Senator felt strongly in opposition – 17 hours strong. But in the end, only two senators voted against Mr. Erdman. The job of the university curators is to provide sound financial management and set overall administrative guidance for the entire university system. The majority of Senators agreed that Mr. Erdman met those qualifications.

After the filibuster, some senators made the decision to head home in the middle of the night. Because Friday is our only working day in our home district during session, many had appointments that could only be met on that day. As for me, the safer course was to stay in Jefferson City and sleep about 3 hours before heading home. I made it back to Clay County in time to attend a brown bag lunch with parents, children and teachers of the gifted program at Briarcliff Elementary.

To the delight of the students, I had to take my Basset Hound, Katy, with me to the school. There was no time to take Katy home and still make it to the school on time. Katy had been in Jefferson City with me during the week to film a public service announcement in support of pet adoptions. My husband and I adopted Katy when she was only one year old from Wayside Waifs, which is an animal shelter in Kansas City. Katy is now 14 years old. She is an AKC registered dog. She has been a real delight. The public service announcements will run in Clay County on cable TV, so some of you might see us in the near future.

The pace of legislative session will pickup considerably now. I've had hearings recently on two bills that I sponsored. One bill would increase the penalties for boating while intoxicated (BWI) and alter the blood alcohol content for BWI to match Missouri's standard for driving while intoxicated. Another bill is designed to decrease our dependence on foreign oil by creating consumer incentives (i.e. tax breaks for consumers) to use ethanol products and to purchase hybrid vehicles. This is particularly important for encouraging purchase of vehicles made at the Ford Claycomo plant. Almost all the vehicles manufactured there will run on 85% ethanol or are hybrids that run on a combination of regular unleaded and battery power.

If you have questions about this or any other matter of importance to you, please call my office, toll free, at 866-875-8348 or e-mail me at: luann.ridgeway@senate.mo.gov.

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