



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

For the Week of:
March 26, 2007

Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Contact: Aaron Baker
(573) 751-1507

Protecting Our Most Vulnerable Citizens

Last fall, eleven people lost their lives to a devastating fire at the Anderson Guest House Resident Care Facility. Those precious lives may have been saved if there was a working alarm system.

As a result, a light has been shined on the abuse and neglect occurring in group home facilities in the state. This week, the Missouri Senate gave first round approval to a bill that will better protect Missouri's most vulnerable citizens. Senate Bill 3 establishes a mental health fatality review panel to investigate all suspicious deaths in group home facilities and increase the penalty for not reporting abuse and neglect from an infraction to a class A misdemeanor.

It's our responsibility as lawmakers to ensure the safety of our citizens who are unable to care for themselves. This issue concerns lawmakers from every part of the state. Passing legislation dealing with the serious issue of abuse and neglect in these care facilities is one of the most important tasks we can complete this session.

The mental health reform measure also requires all care facilities and assisted living facilities licensed by the Department of Health and Senior Services to have sprinklers, heat rise detectors and smoke alarms. Currently, Missouri law only requires sprinkler systems in higher care facilities such as skilled nursing centers and intermediate care facilities as well as residential care facilities built after 2000. SB 3 would require all care facilities to have working fire alarms installed by August 28, 2009 and working sprinkler systems installed by 2012 or face stricter safety requirements.

Many constituents of the 21st Senatorial District look at these facilities as more than just a business, they consider them a home. Our residents in these facilities should feel safe and secure and with these added measures in SB 3, we are on the right road to making that happen.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

- END -