



THE STOUFFER REPORT

Senator Bill Stouffer
Senate District 21

For the Week of:
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Capitol Building, Room 332
Jefferson City, MO 65101

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Outside the Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate Act

Death is hardly a welcomed topic, but must be addressed from time to time. Imagine family and friends gathered around a loved one who is about to die. This person has received hospice care and knows the end is near. The patient is in the comfort of their own home and they wish to leave this world surrounded by their family and friends. Due to the unusual activity occurring at this patient's residence, a neighbor becomes concerned and dials 9-1-1. After all, you can never be too safe these days. Little does this neighbor know, as her fingers dial the emergency number, they unleashed a chain of events that drastically changed the way her neighbor wanted to pass.

Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) are required to resuscitate an individual when called to the scene of an emergency. Even though this patient was pronounced dead by a hospice nurse at the home, the EMTs continue resuscitation efforts until they reach the hospital where the patient is then pronounced clinically dead. If these events are not traumatic enough, police are called to the family home where crime tape is hung and interrogations on family members are performed.

This horrible incident was nobody's fault – emergency responders were just doing their job.

The Missouri Senate this week gave final approval to legislation establishing the Outside the Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate Act. The legislation was drafted in response to a growing number of older Missourians who wish to end their lives at home with family members and hospice care rather than at a hospital.

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With the Outside the Hospital Do-Not-Resuscitate Act, scenes like the one above can avoid being played out. HB 182 requires that a copy of a do-not-resuscitate order must be included as the first page of a patient's medical record. The order may be carried out by a patient or a patient's representative and the patient's attending physician.

The Department of Health and Senior Services must develop and approve uniform orders and personal identifiers. These identifiers must alert any emergency medical technician, paramedic, first responder, or other health care provider of the existence of this order for the patient. However, the order will only be effective when the patient has not been admitted to, or is not being treated within a hospital or if the patient is pregnant.

These do-not-resuscitate notification forms would be placed in easy to see locations for EMT workers. The forms can be displayed by the front door in the home, on a bedside table or the patient's information may be worn on the body as a bracelet.

Communication between family members is the key to carrying out some of the most difficult final wishes. The patient and their family at the beginning of this column had an opportunity to spend their final moments together in peace and serenity. This measure ensures emergency responders know and respect the wishes of the patient and their family. HB 182 has widespread support has been sent to the governor for his signature.

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.

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