



MISSOURI SENATE

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For Immediate Release:
January 18, 2007

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Sen. Crowell to Introduce Legislation Protecting Missouri Reporters and Sources

JEFFERSON CITY—Sen. Jason Crowell, R-Cape Girardeau, introduced legislation protecting journalists' confidential sources.

SB 307 will protect reporters from being forced to reveal the identities of confidential sources or disclose unpublished or non-broadcast information until after a court considers the importance and relevancy of the information sought.

“An aggressive and independent press is vital in assuring that the individual liberties of Americans are not violated, but sometimes the only way for a reporter to get information to the public is to offer anonymity to knowledgeable sources,” Crowell said. “Reporters should not be punished by the courts for upholding their commitment to confidentiality.”

The shield law would cover any person or entity that disseminates information to the public by way of a newspaper, book, magazine, pamphlet or other periodical, radio or television broadcast, or through a news agency, wire service or news syndicate. The qualified privilege would not be granted if the court determines that the information sought is not required to be kept secret under federal or state law and cannot be obtained from any other source, or if its diffusion is essential to the protection of the public interest.

“Without this shield law, whistleblowers will be discouraged from coming forward, and the free flow of information will suffer from a chilling effect.” Crowell said. “Physicians and attorneys are offered certain defenses to protect individuals when it comes to divulging sensitive information to the courts. Journalists, too, should be offered a protective shield.”

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