

For Immediate Release
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SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

With much of the 33rd Senate district retuning to somewhat normal conditions after the ice storms we recently experienced, I want to begin by thanking many of the volunteers, workers and community leaders who all pulled together in the recent storms that swept through this area. In working with people in these communities, I am once again proud of the way that the people all pull together in time of trouble to reach out and help those in need. Work crews from all over the country and local charities, churches, and community groups as well as individuals often went far beyond what was expected from them to serve those in need. Again, it makes us all proud to live in an area where people still care about their neighbors.

In your State Capitol work is beginning to steadily pick up as the legislature moves into its second month. Most of the committees are meeting and working on legislation that will soon be moved out onto the floor of the House and Senate for debate. In the committee that I chair, Health & Mental Health, we have heard several bills including a bill that deals with the safety issues in many of our residential care facilities. This is a top issue in the state because of the fire that swept through one of these homes back in December.

The idea is to craft a piece of legislation that will prevent this from happening again, but not to overreact and cause the cost and care of these individuals to become overly expensive for those families whose loved ones reside in these homes.

In the Appropriations Committee, the Senate members are going through the operating budgets of all of the state departments. Although at times it is very tenuous and sometimes out right boring, it is a very important function of the legislature to oversee the finances of the state departments and make sure that the money they are awarded has been and will be spent wisely in the business of state government. These meetings will continue as we work toward meeting our constructional deadline of the first Friday in May for presenting our state budget to the Governor.

In floor debate this week, the Senate debated SB284, or what is known as the Telecommunications Bill. This bill is supposedly a result of a year of work and negotiations

between local cable companies and the major phone companies on the service of broadband and communications with the state. One the jobs I have is to insure that our large rural areas are not overlooked for service of new technologies by many of the companies who serve in these areas but tend to try to cherry pick some of the large urban areas. Hopefully, we will be able to craft a balanced bill and move forward.

This week also saw the annual State of the Transportation address by our transportation director, Peter Rahn. He outlined the accomplishments of MoDOT over the past year and presented the plans for the Safer, Smoother, Sooner Highway Project Plan.

Missouri's biodiesel discussion will move on to the Senate floor after the Agriculture, Conservation, Parks and Natural Resources Committee voted 7-1 Tuesday in favor of a bill that would require all biodiesel fuel sold in Missouri after January 1, 2009, to contain at least five percent biodiesel. I was the lone no vote on this committee because I feel that government mandates do nothing except produce higher costs for the consumers. I am in favor of producing biodiesel, but the product should be able to compete on the open market and not rely on government mandates and subsidies to compete.

I welcome your opinions and suggestions. You may reach me at 573-751-1882, e-mail to chuck.purgason@senate.mo.gov, or write to me at the Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Room 420, Jefferson City, MO 65101. If you would like to receive these newsletters electronically, please call or e-mail my office.

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