

For Immediate Release

May 3, 2007

SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

With two and a half weeks left in the legislative session, the pace of the legislation and the activity around the Capitol have really picked up. House bills are being debated in the Senate and Senate bills are being debated in the House. Bills that have passed both chambers are in conference and the differences in the particular pieces of legislation are being hammered out among the bill sponsors and the different House and Senate members on the committees.

The budget is also in conference and should be up for final floor debate and passage before the constitutional deadline of Friday, May 11th. One of the important pieces of legislation being debated this week is House Bill 444, which is the tax cut bill for social security. In crafting this year's budget, we built in \$100 million for this tax cut that will help out seniors. Missouri is one of only fifteen states that impose this tax on our senior citizens.

The problem is that many amendments are offered that are good amendments, but they explode the amount that we have budgeted. Most of these amendments are being offered for campaign material that will be used against many of the members in the coming election. But unfortunately that is the reality of the mesh between governing and political campaigns.

It is very important that good amendments are defeated so that the original intent does not die from the overall cost of the bill. The House version started out at \$100 million and by some reports grew to over \$250 million before it left that body. It is up to the Senate to make sure that we come out with a bill that is clean and also stays within the budget constraints that have been put in place by the Governor and the budget committee. This often leads to the General Assembly Majority members having to show leadership and saying no to other special interest groups.

This is also the time of year when working here in Jefferson City reminds me of a couple of spoiled kids trying to play together in the sandbox. I see several members of the House and Senate either holding the other's bills hostage or not acting upon legislation until the other body acts on another piece of legislation. One side may be afraid to pass a bill until the other body passes a bill because then one side or the other loses leverage.

I have seen this every year I have been in the General Assembly. Both parties are equally guilty of using this tactic. That game of tug of war continues this year. For example, the Senate has the Speaker of the House's Social Security tax cut bill. The House has the Senate Floor Leader's bill on the new HealthNet program. Both leaders are posturing on the movement of these bills through the General Assembly. Everyone that files a bill and has it pass from one body to another has had their bill either held up or loaded up in one way or another.

This year I spent a vast amount of time working with private property groups, the Department of Agriculture, Farm Bureau, and other farm interest groups to craft a bill that would assure that the National Animal Identification System would remain voluntary here in the state of Missouri. The bill passed the Senate 29-2. When it got to the House, the Agriculture Policy Committee chair took a three page bill and loaded it up with the CAFO bill, tax credits, loan programs, and other bills so that it is now almost one hundred pages long. This basically kills the bill and negates the work that was done on it. But that is life in the General Assembly.

Whenever you hear someone complain about our form of government, one has only to think that the alternative form of government is a dictatorship. Our forefathers, who designed this republic, did not trust government so many checks and balances were put into place. These checks and balances have served us well the past couple of hundred years and it is the best form of government in the world. But it does require the active participation of all involved along with bottles of headache, heartburn, and mood-altering medications to keep a person from going totally insane.

As always, 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.

#####