

For Immediate Release

May 18, 2007

SHARING A VIEW OF THE STATE

Issues and Comments – 33rd Senatorial District

Senator

Chuck Purgason

At this writing this session of the General Assembly is in its final day. The budget is on the Governor's desk along with various pieces of legislation. Many more bills are on their way to final passage.

One of the largest bills in this final category is Senate Bill 577 --- the new MO HealthNet bill. This bill will begin the implementation of the new program to provide health care to approximately one million people here in the state of Missouri.

This bill will always be a work in progress. There is no way to turn around a program that has been in force for forty-five years with one bill. It will take more of a cultural shift to move people toward providing for their own health care and health care needs rather than depending on the government-run health care system. But this bill does place more emphasis on prevention and begins the process of giving more people the choices that are lacking in today's government health care system.

Another issue is Senate Bill 156 and Senate Bill 428. These bills will probably die in the Missouri House this year. These bills would insure that the National Animal Identification System would remain voluntary in the state of Missouri.

There has been much misunderstanding about this bill by the farm groups involved. The pro-farm groups have been in opposition to this legislation even though we are all in favor of a voluntary animal identification system.

The difference is that I want to make sure that any program that would be made mandatory must get the approval of the General Assembly. When I stand in front of a bunch of people and say this program is voluntary, I want to make sure that I am telling them the truth and that the program will stay that way unless the change is made by the General Assembly.

What the opposition will not say is that the director of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in Washington can take the program from voluntary to mandatory with the stroke of a pen. I don't believe I can be honest and say that I am for a voluntary program and not take the steps necessary to keep my word and insure that the program could never go mandatory without legislative approval.

Either of these bills would have also insured that the state veterinarian could take the necessary steps to eradicate any disease outbreak, but the program would ultimately have to go from voluntary to mandatory only with General Assembly approval. The bills were also written to protect the producers who want to enter into contracts with growers who would require a premise ID. They would give producers who decide to opt out of the program the ability to do so. From my point of view the language was written to allow people the ability to voluntarily enter into marketing programs to market their livestock and receive a premium, but also protect the farmer who would rather not deal with the USDA.

Another issue I have been proud to work on is the Castle Bill. This bill protects a resident from being forced to retreat if anyone tries to forcefully enter one's home. This is just another common sense measure that assures people have the right to protect their home and family.

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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