



Key Legislation Under Study By Committees

JEFFERSON CITY — During last week’s legislative season, my fellow legislators and I continued to work on key legislative issues for 2008 by discussing introduced bills in committee and sending some legislation to the Senate floor.

Senators spent most of their week in committee hearings. After a bill is introduced on the Senate floor, it is then referred to the Senate committee that most closely relates to the issues addressed in the legislation. Committee members debate the legislation and decide whether to approve it for the Senate calendar and possible future debate on the Senate floor. Committees typically hold public hearings to give constituents a chance to offer their thoughts on certain legislation.

Several key pieces of legislation were discussed last week in the Senate. Senate Bill 713, a measure introduced by Senate President Pro Tem Michael Gibbons (R-Kirkwood), was presented to the Senate Education Committee. The bill would protect school district employees who report on or discuss employee performance for the purpose of making employment decisions that affect the safety of students. Employees facing the threat of a lawsuit would be granted civil immunity. Recently, I introduced a bill of a similar nature, Senate Bill 844, which would require school districts to request teacher records prior to extending an offer of employment to a prospective teacher.

The Economic Development, Tourism and Local Government Committee passed Sen. Jack Goodman’s (R-Mt. Vernon) village law repeal, SB 765. The controversial law passed last year makes it substantially easier for a landowner to incorporate a village and circumvent county jurisdiction. The bill will likely be debated on the Senate floor in the coming weeks.

My Senate Bill 857, which would expand the state’s no-call list to include automated calls and require a “paid for by” statement on political phone calls, is under consideration by the Senate’s Commerce, Energy and the Environment Committee. The proposed bill would eliminate another means of unwanted phone calls, with exceptions.

Last week, I also introduced Senate Bill 1018, which would allow the municipalities in St. Charles County to adopt ordinances necessary for the well-being of the community and enforce those ordinances. Currently, municipalities in St. Louis County may adopt and enforce such ordinances.

Two of my most important pieces of legislation are expected to be considered by committees this week: Senate Bill 768, which would create the Missouri Commission on Autism Spectrum Disorders, will be reviewed by the Seniors, Families and Public Health Committee; and Senate Bill 818, which would make cyber harassment and cyber stalking crimes, will be deliberated by the Judiciary Committee.

To follow these and other issues facing the Missouri Senate, visit www.senate.mo.gov. Visitors can track legislation as it passes through the General Assembly, learn more about their Senate district, or listen to streaming audio of legislative debate as it happens.

If you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at (866) 271-2844.

#