



MISSOURI SENATE

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Maida Coleman
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General Assembly Sends Sen. Coleman's Hot-Weather Legislation to Governor

JEFFERSON CITY— Missouri lawmakers today gave final approval to a hot weather bill sponsored by Sen. Maida Coleman, D-St. Louis City. Senate Bill 720, which includes the Senator's "hot weather rule," makes a number of changes to utilities that operate in Missouri.

The hot weather rule is similar to the cold weather rule already in place that prevents utility companies from disconnecting service during weather extremes. The hot weather rule will apply from June 1st to September 30th. During this time, natural gas or electricity providers are prohibited from disconnecting service to residential customers on days when either the temperature is expected to rise above 95 degrees or the heat index is expected to rise above 105 degrees for the following twenty-four hour period or on days when service personnel will not be available to reconnect service and the temperature or heat index is expected to rise above these marks.

"The excessive heat and humidity that Missourians experience during the summer months is not just uncomfortable — it is life-threatening," Coleman said. "Many Missourians cannot afford to keep their homes cool during severe conditions, and this legislation ensures that we will not turn our backs on them."

Homes that qualify for the "cold-weather rule" are eligible under SB 720.

Sen. Coleman noted that press accounts put the number of heat-related deaths in the St. Louis area in 2006 at anywhere from 12 to 14. By August 8, 2006, there were six heat-related deaths in Kansas City. Many of these were elderly Missourians found dead in their homes.

“These folks — all Missouri citizens — are the parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters of residents of this state,” Coleman said. “It is unacceptable that in modern times we still have senseless deaths such as these.”

Sen. Coleman also cited a report stating that Missouri had the third-highest number of heat-related deaths in the nation in 2006. Only the desert states of Arizona and Nevada had more.

Missouri has received national attention for being a leader in enacting the cold-weather rule, which prevents utilities from cutting off power when the temperature is forecast to drop below 32 degrees between Nov. 1 and March 31. That law has been in effect since 1977.

“To elderly and needy people, to hard-working families that have trouble making ends meet through the summer, this legislation provides a small step forward to ensure that our most vulnerable citizens are not the victims of preventable heat-related deaths,” Coleman said.

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