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Expanding DNA Profiling to Solve More Crimes

Lightning may never strike in the same place twice, but eventually, it does strike again. And rarely does the perpetrator of a violent crime strike just one time, never to commit another criminal act again. Fortunately, Missouri has a tool in place that greatly helps law enforcement catch these violent criminals — DNA testing — and we are well on our way to expanding this exceedingly valuable program.

Missouri's DNA profiling system assists law enforcement agencies with the identification, investigation and prosecution of individuals by requiring certain convicted criminals to submit a DNA sample for placement in a database. Future crimes may then be tested against the database, significantly increasing the chance of solving crimes committed by repeat offenders and helping law enforcement track down these individuals.

DNA testing became especially helpful after legislation was enacted in 2005 that expanded the state's program. [Senate Bill 1000](#), which I sponsored, increased the scope of DNA testing to include every felon in the Missouri prison system, even those on parole. Before the measure became a law, the state only tested certain individuals who were convicted of violent or sexual crimes, which although helpful, was not as comprehensive as necessary. If a bill I'm co-sponsoring this session passes, the state would expand DNA profiling even further to include juveniles who commit certain violent crimes.

[Senate Bill 754](#), which this week received final approval from the Senate, requires certain juveniles to submit DNA samples based on the crime they have already committed — be it a felony or sexual offense. If it weren't for their age, these individuals would already be subject to DNA testing under the current law. Inevitably, some of these juvenile criminals will reveal themselves to be violent predators who have thus far managed to keep one step ahead of the law.

DNA technology allows Missouri's criminal justice system to run more effectively and fairly than ever. Currently, the Missouri Offender DNA database maintains over 150,000 profiles. As the database grows, more unsolved crimes, or "cold cases," are solved. In 2005, when the program first expanded, 144 crimes were solved because of SB 1000. The number skyrocketed to 630 in 2006 and was recorded at 527 in 2007.

The program counts many successes. DNA profiling led to the capture of a Kansas City man who raped a 14-year-old girl. With his DNA already in the database, police were able to connect the man to the crime and charge him. Last year, DNA testing linked the 1990 rape and robbery of a 29-year-old woman in her home in Kansas City to a current inmate. And for those who are falsely accused, DNA testing

proves useful as well. One Springfield man was cleared of charges after serving 21 months in jail for kidnapping and rape.

On average, since 2005 Missouri's current DNA program has helped solve a homicide or sexual assault crime three times a week, and if SB 754 is approved, there are even more crimes that could be solved. Unfortunately, some individuals who are not yet legally considered adults are still dangerous and pose a threat to our communities. Once a person commits a violent or sexual offense, society is justified in taking a DNA sample — regardless of age. The number of criminals apprehended through the use of DNA testing is just too compelling to ignore.

If you have any 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 e-mail at matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.