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Fighting Meth and its Assault on Our Communities

Over the past several years, my colleagues and I have made it progressively tougher for individuals to manufacture methamphetamine — an exceptionally addictive and destructive drug that can cause irreparable harm to individuals, their families and entire communities. At the close of this year's legislative session, we passed a measure giving Missouri some of the toughest and most expansive anti-meth laws in the country.

One of the main ingredients in methamphetamine is a compound (ephedrine or the closely linked pseudoephedrine) found in many non-prescription cold sprays, gels and tablets. In 2003, we enacted legislation limiting the number of packages of products containing the compound that could be bought at any given time, and also required that these products be taken off store shelves and placed behind the counters to better gauge their sale. In 2005, lawmakers limited how many pseudoephedrine products could be bought in a 30-day period, and put in place a system to log and track purchases. This year, with the passage of SB 724, we upgraded the current paper log by requiring that all pharmacies maintain the log in an electronic, real-time form, allowing for faster searching and yielding more accurate information. The bill also limits the forms of acceptable identification for making these purchases to IDs issued only by the federal or a state government.

Widespread meth use and production in Missouri — which accounted for the second largest number of meth lab busts in the nation last year at 1,285 — demanded that we extend the laws once again to help put a stop to meth activity in our communities. We know that individuals intent on producing meth have found ways get around current laws. This legislation ensures that people purchasing pseudoephedrine with intent to make meth cannot buy more than is allowed by law. Just as importantly, it provides a more effective electronic trail of pseudoephedrine purchases that will assist law enforcement officials in capturing and convicting people who are producing this debilitating drug.

While the provisions of SB 724 work to control how meth ingredients are attained, Missouri is also fighting the drug wherever it's being produced. House Bill 2022, a supplemental budget bill, added nearly \$1.88 million to the MoSMART program, a coalition of sheriffs, deputy sheriffs and other law enforcement officials from across the state who work to uncover and shut down meth cooking operations.

Using meth inflicts so much damage, not just on the body, but on a person's entire life — nothing is unaffected. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be in a position to help end the production and use of a drug that serves no purpose other than to shatter lives.

As a side note, you may not be aware that the Missouri State Fair is currently underway. The event runs Aug. 7-17 at the Missouri State Fairgrounds in Sedalia and features more affordable admission prices this year. With limitless entertainment options, a trip to Sedalia this weekend is a fun activity for your whole family. 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>.

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