



# SENATOR MATT BARTLE

**District 8 – Capitol Building, Room 319 Jefferson City, MO 65101**

**Column for Week of:  
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## **Water Patrol Serves Missouri**

Missouri is blessed with beautiful lakes, rivers and streams. So many waterways, in fact, that the shoreline mileage of just the portions of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers that pass through or along the Show-Me State exceeds Florida's coastline miles. While few things are more enjoyable than a weekend of boating or a float trip down one of these scenic waterways, it is easy to take for granted the individuals charged with the responsibility of enforcing the state's laws and helping to keep citizens safe while enjoying our free time on the water—the Missouri State Water Patrol.

This past session the Legislature passed a bill that was signed into law by our governor to help the Water Patrol continue its exceptional service to Missouri. This law (which became effective last week) removes the 99-member cap on the agency, allowing individuals to be hired as needed and as funded by the Legislature. Estimates are that perhaps more than 20 more officers could be added to the force in the future.

The Missouri Water Patrol does much more than patrolling the state's waterways for reckless boat operators. During flooding conditions, the agency steps in to provide rescue and recovery assistance to Missourians. It works with the State Emergency Management Agency and other groups during these dangerous—and often deadly—situations. Also, in the case of a drowning or boating accident where diving is required, the Water Patrol Dive Team is often called on to recover victims, or to retrieve criminal evidence. The team conducts an average of 40 dive operations annually. As you can imagine, the Water Patrol has been responsible for saving many lives over the years, whether by cracking down on intoxicated boaters or rescuing someone from rising flood waters.

A water patrol officer was recently honored by the governor for heroic state service. Officer Frederick Guthrie was among four law enforcement officers recently awarded the Missouri Medal of Valor. Officer Guthrie was commended for his actions following a severe thunderstorm on June 22, 2007, when he received reports that several boats were capsized or flooded. Six-foot waves prevented Officer Guthrie from safely navigating his patrol boat to assess the situation, so he was forced to return to the marina where he learned that a woman without a life jacket had been tossed from her boat and was desperately grasping onto a buoy. Despite the treacherous conditions, he went back out on his boat and successfully rescued the victim.

The agency's assistance isn't limited to Missouri. Hurricane Gustav's assault on Louisiana resulted in some members of the Missouri Water Patrol being sent to the state's water-logged coast to help with flood relief. Six officers will help as needed during the next few weeks.

On a side note, next week the Legislature reconvenes for its annual veto session. The Missouri Constitution requires lawmakers to return to the Capitol every September if the governor vetoes any of the bills passed during the regular legislative session. To overturn a governor's veto, two-thirds of the members of both chambers must vote to override. It is a rare occurrence and is not likely to happen this year. This short veto session serves as a reminder that the 2009 legislative session, which begins on January 7<sup>th</sup>, is just around the corner.

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](mailto: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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