



For Immediate Release

Sen. Timothy Green's Bill Protecting Taxpayers From Being Overcharged for Professional Services Advances

JEFFERSON CITY, MO – Today the Senate Economic Development, Tourism and Local Government committee, chaired by Sen. John Griesheimer, R-Washington heard SB 1254, introduced by Sen. Timothy Green, D-Spanish Lake. The bill will protect taxpayers from being overcharged for professional services by mandating competitive bidding for those services in governing bodies having the power to tax.

The senator said his bill would include fire districts, counties, municipalities, villages, and other political subdivisions having the power to tax under state statutes and was introduced as a result of a series of articles in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, as well as calls from North St. Louis County taxpayers.

“The newspaper’s series on the Northeast Ambulance and Fire Protection District—which is in my senatorial district—and its recent editorial, ‘Walton’s Mountain of Loot’, leaves no doubt that a law is necessary to protect taxpayers from overcharging by professionals working for political subdivisions” said Sen. Green.

“As Elizabethe Holland of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported ‘in his first six months as the (fire) district’s attorney, Mr. Walton billed Northeast taxpayers for \$76,671 in legal fees. That was six times more than his predecessor billed in an average year. Even by the loosey-goosey standards that govern many of the area’s dozens of fire districts, Mr. Walton’s bill is steep. The median for legal fees in those districts is \$20,000 — per year.’”

Sen. Green said his "Political Subdivision Services Bidding Standards Act" would ensure that contracts for professional services must be advertised and bids solicited and awarded in compliance with any federal, state and local law specifically written for each political subdivision.

“I’m particularly concerned as Mr. Walton and his wife, state Rep. Juanita Head Walton already have a history of profiting off taxpayers while performing lousy service,” Sen. Green said. “The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* reported that as a former state legislator in 1995, Mr. Walton was awarded a political plum in the Charlack license fee office, and then suffered the humiliation of having a governor (Mel Carnahan) from his own party take it away from him for lousy service and missing funds. His wife, Rep. Walton, was the treasurer of the management firm that operated the license office.”

—MORE—

Page two—Green Calls for Competitive Bidding

The standards in the bill will ensure local accountability to the taxpayers in taxing entities.

“The bill says contracts for services will be advertised in advance of the acceptance of bids for a minimum of five days in an area newspaper, with the first ad appearing at least 30 days in advance of the stated deadline for acceptance of bids,” he said.

“For contracts for over \$50,000, bids shall also be advertised by providing information to at least one organization which regularly provides information to contractors providing the service needed. Ads and solicitations must include the submission deadline.

“Most importantly, contracts must be awarded to the ‘lowest qualified responsible bidder.’ The bidder's qualification will be determined by his or her education and training. However, the proposal allows for necessary adaptability so the political subdivision can reject the low bidder based on the bidder's failure to provide a performance or payment bond or non-performance on previous contracts. The reason for rejection must be provided to the bidder within five business days.

“No contract will be awarded in violation of certain requirements, including opening bids in advance of the advertising deadline, accepting bids that are unwritten, accepting bids after the advertised deadline, and failing to hold bids confidential.

“For the 21st Century convenience of all parties, electronic bidding will be allowed if it meets the standards of confidentiality.

“The contract for these services should be competitively bid out to the lowest qualified responsible bidder.” said Sen. Green. “Mr. Walton’s outrageous fees that cost the taxpayer tens of thousands of dollars are reprehensible; these are not reasonable fees for normal legal work.” said Sen. Green.

###