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that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Legislation to Protect Students from Teachers with
Harmful Pasts Heard by Senate Committee**
Sen. Gibbons Presents Bill to Keep Harmful Teachers Out of Schools

JEFFERSON CITY – Teachers with a history of endangering students will no longer be able to hop from school district to school district trying to outrun their pasts if legislation presented to the Senate Education Committee today passes. Senate Bill 713, sponsored by Senate Leader Michael R. Gibbons, makes sure that Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and school district employees are able to discuss and report the full scope of personnel files to prospective new employers. Gibbons said he was alarmed by an Associated Press investigation that discovered teachers who fell through the cracks because former school employers feared lawsuits if they forwarded truthful information that could negatively influence the employee's future job.

"It's unacceptable to allow the fear of lawsuits to trump the safety of our students," said Gibbons, R-Kirkwood. "We want to protect our students by making sure the whole truth is reported when it comes to school officials recommending teachers who have dangerous pasts."

The measure grants civil immunity to Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and school district employees who report truthful information to employers about past employees. The legal expense fund would pay for the defense of any school district or school district employee.

The Associated Press found that 87 licensed teachers in Missouri lost their credentials from 2001 through 2005 over sexual misconduct, with at least 50 of those having sexually abused their students, and another 15 assaulting children they met outside the classroom.

One of the most egregious cases documented one teacher, and later principal, who had a 20-year career spanning more than half a dozen school districts even though his personnel records included fights on and off school grounds and multiple sexual harassment complaints in several districts. His license was finally revoked because of sex with an underage girl.

Gibbons came up with the idea after studying the Associated Press' findings. He said the bill still allows confidentiality agreements to protect students who have been harmed or sexually abused while making sure the teachers who did it don't get hired in another district.

"By simply protecting employers who tell the whole truth when recommending teachers to new districts, we can stop these few harmful teachers from falling through the cracks," he said.

A summary as well as full text of the bill can be found by visiting www.senate.mo.gov and doing a keyword search for SB713. It must be approved by the Senate Education Committee before consideration by the full chamber.

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