



Column For Week of: March 24, 2008

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Protecting Intellectual Property in Missouri

Senate Bill 1244, legislation I sponsored, was heard in the Senate Economic Development, Tourism & Local Government Committee earlier this month. Witnesses testifying in support of my legislation said the measure is “the first of its kind in the nation” and that it will make Missouri a very attractive place for entrepreneurs to do business. Supporters told committee members this landmark legislation will bring “a tidal wave of new businesses and jobs to Missouri.”

Senate Bill 1244 creates the Entrepreneurial Development Council within the state Department of Economic Development. The legislation forms a seven-member panel composed of business people and intellectual property experts. The measure also creates the entrepreneurial development and intellectual property rights protection fund. The council would have the authority to allocate money from the fund to help pay the legal fees of entrepreneurs who allege violations of their patents. The council also could allocate money from the fund to entrepreneurs who register with the council for the development, manufacture and advertisement of new products.

The key forms of intellectual property are patents, copyrights, trademarks and trade secrets. Intellectual property rights laws enable owners, inventors and creators to protect their property from unauthorized uses.

If someone comes up with an idea for a new product or service and obtains a patent, I want to make sure their intellectual property rights are protected. We heard a lot of testimony during the committee meeting that this bill could bring new business and jobs to

Missouri. Witnesses told us that entrepreneurs would move to Missouri so their patents would be protected and that businesses would relocate to Missouri if this bill becomes law.

Those testifying in favor of the bill included Dr. Ed Maters of Sikeston, who currently holds seven patents and has applied for two more; Richard LeBrash of Salem, an inventor who holds multiple patents; and Dr. Jerry Plunkett, a businessman and inventor from Dixon. Each of these inventors praised the bill for working to create a protective environment for individuals and small companies that would otherwise not be in a position to defend their patents. Their experience in the field led them to point out how attractive the measure would make Missouri for businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors.

Senate Bill 1244 received a unanimous committee vote this week and now moves to the Senate floor for debate. I look forward to discussing this business-friendly legislation as the session progresses.

Contact Me

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions and concerns. Please feel free to call me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2108. You can also write to me at Frank Barnitz, Missouri Senate, State Capitol, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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