



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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A Weekly Column for the
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Free and Fair Discussion?

JEFFERSON CITY – This might seem like a bit of “inside baseball,” but I want to tell you about our efforts to restore a sense of decorum to the state Senate. Too often in recent years, the majority has used a rare parliamentary procedure known as “calling the previous question” to cut off debate and force a vote on a bill. In the past this procedure was used only when one senator tried to stall a bill that the vast majority supported, but lately it’s been used willy-nilly. I supported an effort this week to require a three-fifths majority vote before the procedure could be used, but our attempt to reinstate fairness in the senate failed.

I look at this resolution as a way to protect the institution from ourselves, from the governor and from the lobbyists who stand outside the Senate chamber. How do we force ourselves – whether we like it or not – to sit down and work together? Passage of this measure would have achieved that goal. It’s not about whether you are in the majority or the minority – it’s about preserving the “free and fair discussion” emblazoned on the wall of the Senate chamber. The one thing I enjoy most about the Senate is that we work across the aisle. The House is supposed to be a partisan chamber that reflects the passion of the people. The Senate is where cooler heads prevail, where ideas simmer on the burner for a while until all arguments are heard and considered. Without this resolution, the Senate is just a smaller version of the House.

At the request of Lewis County Sheriff David Parrish, I presented a bill this week to the Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee that makes it a Class B misdemeanor to lie to a law enforcement officer during a criminal investigation. You would think that making a false statement to a law enforcement officer would already be illegal, but

Missouri has no obstruction of justice statute. I appreciate the fact Sheriff Parrish came to the Capitol to testify in favor of this legislation.

Last week I testified in favor of Senate Bill 861 before the Judiciary Committee, which creates continuity across the spectrum of DWI enforcement. We heard testimony from the Adair County Prosecutor Mark Williams that municipal DWIs are not treated the same as state offenses, making it difficult to get repeat offenders off of our roads. It should not matter whether a person is arrested by a local police officer or a highway patrolman for drinking while driving – that person should face the same penalty regardless.

The Senate approved a couple of spending bills this week to help folks pay their utility bills and to help our law enforcement agencies fight methamphetamine use. House Bill 2015 provides \$6.4 million to the Department of Social Services for the Utilicare Program, which provides assistance on utility bills. House Bill 2022 provides \$1.87 million to the Department of Public Safety to go to the Missouri Sheriff's Methamphetamine Relief Task Force (MoSMART) to fight meth use, which continues to be a major problem throughout the state.

Finally, I got to meet with folks from the Missouri Alliance for Children, Youth and Families this week as they marked the 26th anniversary of Missouri's Child Advocacy Day. I believe one of the best ways for young people to improve their lives and end the cycle of poverty is access to education. One way I think we can help is to expand the A+ Schools Program to children in foster care. The primary goal of the A+ Schools Program is to ensure that all students who graduate from Missouri high schools are well prepared to go to college or to find a good job. I believe expanding the program will help achieve this goal.

If you have any questions or comments about this or any other issue, give my Capitol office a call at (573) 751-7852, send me an email at wes.shoemyer@senate.mo.gov, or drop a line to Room 434, State Capitol, 201 West Capitol Ave., Jefferson City, MO 65101.