



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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It's A Wonderful Life

I don't know how many folks around here read the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, but the editors of that big city newspaper recently mentioned my hometown in an editorial. The Post-Dispatch made fun of the Missouri Development Finance Board for approving \$25-million in state tax credits to help the Kansas City Chiefs expand their parking lot and build an indoor practice facility in St. Joseph.

I agree, but then they took a jab at Clarence, Missouri, which just shows how little these big city writers understand about life in rural Missouri.

I attended the Missouri Development Finance Board meeting December 16 and complained that this big tax break was being approved without the public's knowledge at a time when the state could not afford it. I didn't even know the board was meeting until a reporter called me a day earlier to ask me for a comment. Despite my concerns, the board, which is chaired by Lt. Governor Peter Kinder, unanimously approved this huge tax giveaway at a time the state is facing a \$342-million budget shortfall.

The editorial writers at the Post-Dispatch noted my opposition to this \$25-million handout, and then said "Sen. Shoemyer will change his tune when the NFL puts a team in northeast Missouri – the Clarence Oddbodies, perhaps."

It's a cute reference to the angel in Frank Capra's "It's A Wonderful Life," the classic Christmas movie starring Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed. And like the angel Clarence Oddbody, the folks in Clarence, Missouri are down-to-earth, honest, hard-working souls. The same is true of the people who live in Paris, and Monroe City, and all over northeast Missouri.

We sure wouldn't need a wimpy indoor practice facility if we had an NFL team in northeast Missouri. Our hardy citizens would happily practice in the heat of a sweltering

Missouri summer and in the frigid cold of our winters. We'd find a nice, fairly level pasture to practice on and maybe use cow patties as hash marks on the practice field. We could even let the cows graze on the field during practice, pretending they are defensive ends and linemen. I'm sure if we set up some bales of hay along the sidelines for folks to sit on, they would come from miles around to watch real men play football, as long as practice was held in the evenings when the chores are done.

For teams in the Midwest, the weather is kind of like the 12th player on the team – sometimes it gives the home team an advantage. By practicing indoors, the Chiefs are giving up their home-field advantage, unless they plan to put a dome over Arrowhead.

But maybe the folks in Clarence do seem “odd” to city dwellers who spend a couple hours every day stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic, who toil away in Dilbert-like cubicles from 9-5 in their windowless high rise buildings, and who never have to clean dirt off of their boots or their hands.

I guess when it comes right down to it, I'm proud to be a “Clarence Oddbody.”

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.