



Senator  
**Bill Stouffer**

**DISTRICT 21**

Senator Bill Stouffer – Cultivating Rural Missouri.

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## The Stouffer Report: What Is a Consent Bill?

Despite the ads that we will be hearing later this year, not everything that comes before the legislature is controversial.

With the 2008 legislative session at its end, this is usually the time when lawmakers take a look back at the year's big accomplishments. However, every year bills are passed in both chambers that are considered to be noncontroversial. We call those consent bills.

Actually, several of the bills that come out of the House and the Senate start as consent bills. Most of the time, a consent bill seeks to make an adjustment with an existing law or a correction most people would agree with. Granted, most lawmakers who introduce a bill consider the bill to be perfect and noncontroversial. However, not everybody agrees with that assessment when they read it.

For the most part, a bill is not considered "consent" until its sponsor requests it be considered as such. This has to happen at least one day before the bill is heard in the committee. Once it is heard, the bill has to receive unanimous support.

The bill has to stay on the Consent Calendar, or agenda, for five days. During that time, any senator is free to make a written objection to consent status. He or she may request the bill be returned to the committee that approved it as "consent." Plus, a rules committee may remove a bill from the Consent Calendar with a simple majority.

A consent bill cannot be amended, which makes its passage much, much faster. Normally, bills have to go through a preliminary vote, which we refer to as a "perfection" vote and then a second "third read" vote. Consent bills get the benefit of the doubt, as it were.

This session, there were nearly two dozen Senate consent bills. One of them is a bill I sponsored. [Senate Bill 841](#) would update the laws regarding motor vehicle weight regulations. It falls under the category of making a small

change to an existing law. The Senate passed SB 841 at the end of February. The House spent a little more time on it. Then it went into a conference committee.

[Senate Bill 863](#) would let married taxpayers who file joint returns deduct a portion of their contributions to the Missouri Higher Education Savings Program from their income tax. I like to think of this bill as common sense. It lets you keep more of your own money after you have invested in your children's future.

Another example of a consent bill is [Senate Bill 1105](#), which creates an income tax check off box for making contributions to the Breast Cancer Awareness Trust Fund. This would be a simple change to your state income tax form.

In most cases, consent bills go through the House and Senate pretty quickly. They have little fiscal impact and do not include penalties. Since they are bills that make small changes or have to be done in short order, most lawmakers will agree with the bill sponsor and put them on a fast track.

*Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.*

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at [bstouffer@senate.mo.gov](mailto:bstouffer@senate.mo.gov).

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