



## MISSOURI SENATE

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**A Column for the Week  
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# Curbing Copper Theft

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JEFFERSON CITY — I'm pleased to report the Missouri Senate gave first-round approval this week to my copper theft legislation (Senate Bill 1034) that will short-circuit the efforts of thieves who steal copper and aluminum in Missouri. My proposal requires stronger record-keeping by scrap dealers and makes it a felony to steal or sell stolen copper or aluminum.

As you know, this has been a terrible problem in southeastern Missouri. Just pick up a newspaper and you'll see it is also affecting people across the rest of the state, all over the country and the world. Lured by high metal prices and the prospect of fast cash, these brazen thieves are stealing items ranging from catalytic converters, to back-flow valves, to telephone cable, to farming equipment, to manhole covers — often creating life-or-death situations in their wake. I even read one instance of thieves stealing bronze markers from a World War II memorial.

If approved, the new law requires scrap dealers to obtain driver's license and vehicle information from the people who sell them copper. Also, sales records must include date, time and place of transaction, be kept for two years after the date of purchase, and will be available for inspection by any law enforcement officer.

Scrap metal sales of less than \$50 or when copper or aluminum is a minor part of the transaction will not require tracking (with some exceptions). Payments of more than \$100 will be required to be made by check or another traceable payment method, except for aluminum beverage cans. Scrap dealers will be prohibited from purchasing or possessing metal beer kegs for converting to scrap, unless the keg is purchased from a brewer or brewer's representative. Scrap yards will be prohibited from purchasing cast iron manhole covers without proof of ownership.

Scrap dealers who violate record-keeping requirements will face a class A misdemeanor charge and thieves who steal copper and aluminum scrap metal will be charged with a class D felony.

The key to stopping these widespread thefts lies with the scrap buyers. With stronger guidelines for scrap metal purchases and stiffer penalties for theft, we will be able to curb this alarming problem and make Missouri safer for our citizens.

My Senate colleagues also gave initial support this week to my Senate Bill 754, which expands the state's DNA profiling database to include DNA samples of juveniles found guilty of certain sex crimes, murder and other heinous crimes. The DNA profiling system, which was expanded in 2005 to include DNA samples of all convicted felony

offenders in the state, is a valuable tool that assists federal, state and local law enforcement agencies with identifying, investigating and prosecuting individuals.

We know that many times the same individuals are committing crimes over and over again. Expanding the DNA database will give our state law enforcement officers more information to catch these offenders who are committing lower-level crimes and match some of them up with more hard-core crimes.

It was a very busy week in Jefferson City and I pledge to continue working hard to forward these and other initiatives that are important to the citizens of Southeast Missouri.

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*Senator Rob Mayer represents the people of Wayne, Ripley, Butler, Stoddard, New Madrid,  
Pemiscot and Dunklin counties in the Missouri Senate.*