



April 4, 2008

## Senate Approves Public Defender Initiative

Your Missouri Senate has passed sweeping immigration reform again this session. I will discuss this issue in greater detail in a future update.

One of my top priorities, [Senate Bill 767](#), was given final approval by the Senate last week and is now in the Missouri House for similar consideration. This bill provides needed relief to Missouri's overloaded public defender system. Despite the efforts of hardworking law enforcement officers and prosecutors, the personnel shortage in the public defender system is preventing the guilty from being incarcerated in a timely manner, preventing the innocent from being exonerated and causing the victims of crimes to continue enduring the trauma of that crime for too long. I hope the House will now pass the bill and allow the wheels of justice to resume the needed pace.

I sponsored [Senate Bill 1195](#), which requires the test for commercial driver's licenses to be given in English. It also prohibits the use of language interpreters for these tests. We need to ensure the safety of people on the road and make sure that drivers of big rigs, many of whom also haul hazardous materials, are able to read road signs, instructions and warnings for hazardous materials in English. A prior administration started offering the tests with interpreters. The passage rate of those with interpreters was more than 70 percent, while those taking the test in English had a passage rate around 33 percent. This causes serious concerns that the companies providing interpreters are giving inappropriate assistance with the answers to test questions and compromising the integrity of this important testing process, thereby jeopardizing the safety of everyone on Missouri's roads. The bill has been passed out of committee and is now ready for consideration by the full Senate.

Finally, [SB 1204](#), which I sponsored earlier this session, passed by the Senate Governmental Accountability & Fiscal Oversight Committee last month, and will likely be heard on the Senate floor soon. The measure requires the governor to disclose information regarding state contracts and tax credits and requires the continued use of the Missouri Accountability Portal website to provide public access to government information. I commend Governor Blunt for creating this under his administration. This bill will require subsequent governors to continue providing this important information to the public. I believe our government should operate with transparency at all levels and allow people to access information regarding how our government works. Transparency is the best way to hold government officials accountable and open the lines of communication between public officials and our constituents.

As always, I welcome your ideas, questions and concerns about Missouri government. You may contact me at the Capitol at: (573) 751-2234, [jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jack.goodman@senate.mo.gov) or by writing to Senator Jack Goodman, Missouri State Capitol, Room 331A, Jefferson City, MO 65101.

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