



WEEKLY REPORT

State Senator Gary Nodler
District 32



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Week of April 7, 2008

Preserving Parity & Integrity of Missouri's Election Law

Our system of government and the very essence of democracy is dependent on the will of the people, which is expressed through their votes. For this reason, we need to make sure that our election laws are just and respect the rights and integrity of honest Missourians.

When a person is convicted of a felony in the state of Missouri, they lose their right to run for or hold a public office. This provision is based on the fact that potential criminals make the choice to break the law and, thus, lose the rights that are saved for law-abiding citizens. We want to make sure that this law is clear, and this is why I sponsored [Senate Bill 1245](#), which received approval this week from the Senate Financial & Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee.

A resident from Dade County contacted me to let me know about a loophole in Missouri's election law. Current regulations state that any person who commits a felony in this state is ineligible to run for public office. However, the law does not state that such a crime committed in another state would also disqualify a candidate. Under Senate Bill 1245, this stipulation would be clarified by specifically stating that those who commit a felony in Missouri *or* commit a crime in another jurisdiction that would be considered felony in Missouri, would be barred from qualifying as a candidate for or holding public office. It is important that we close this loophole that now allows felons onto the ballot—a place reserved for law-abiding citizens in our state.

Another election related measure I support that received approval from the committee this week was [House Bill 1310](#). This would require independent candidates to declare their candidacy at the same time as partisan candidates for statewide offices, congressional districts, the state Senate and House, and circuit judge seats. Currently, an independent candidate can file

to run for office months after a partisan candidate's deadline has passed. For example, this year the deadline for independent candidates to file their petition to run in the November 4 election is July 28, but partisan candidates had to file by March 25. Both independent and partisan candidates are filing for elections to be held the first week of November. Partisan candidates gain ballot space by being chosen by voters in a primary election in August. Independent candidates gain space on the ballot by submitting a number of signatures at approximately the same time. Candidates seeking election on the same day should have the same filing deadline. House Bill 1310 works to level the playing field for all candidates to these offices so there are no longer special conditions for independent candidates.

Senate Bill 1245 and House Bill 1310 need to be reported from committee so they may be debated on the Senate floor. It is important that we preserve the parity and integrity of our election system so that Missouri can truly run at the will of the people.

*Senator Gary Nodler represents the people of Newton, Jasper
and Dade counties in the Missouri Senate.*