



Senator Matt Bartle – Serving Jackson County

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## Legislative Session Draws to a Close

By the time many of you read this column, the 2009 legislative session will be officially over, along with any wondering about the fate of most of the 1,700+ pieces of legislation that were introduced by lawmakers this year. When the gavel hits the dais in the Senate chamber at 6 p.m. on Friday, any bill that has not been approved and sent to the governor will have to wait until 2010 for another chance at passage.

Each year, we have about a five-month window in which we must pass our legislation. Hundreds of bills are introduced in the Legislature every session, so as lawmakers, our job is to whittle the list down to the most relevant issues while offering legitimate solutions to the problems facing our state. History (and logistics) shows us that only a few select bills make it through the entire legislative process to become law. However, the success of a legislative session cannot be measured by the number of bills that pass—quality always trumps quantity and the argument can be made that fewer bills is better.

In the coming weeks, I will highlight some of the most important pieces of legislation to be delivered to the governor this session. We covered a wide-range of issues, and despite a challenging year marked by the economic downturn and budget struggles, progress was made and several important bills will be added to the law books.

One bill that has already been sent to the governor is [House Bill 152](#), which I handled in the Senate. This bill expands upon a landmark crime-fighting bill that I worked to pass five years ago, which expanded the state's DNA registry system to include all convicted felons. The difference this has made for law enforcement officers who are trying

to solve crimes cannot be overstated—thousands of solved cases are attributed to DNA law expansions across the country. House Bill 152 takes it a step further by requiring any person who is age 17 or older and who is arrested for certain felonies (including burglary, prostitution and pornography) to provide a DNA sample for the database. This change will make the DNA database an even more effective tool for law enforcement.

It's too early to tell whether certain bills will pass before the last swing of the gavel. Several large bills that address the issues of education and crime still have a shot at passing, even if it happens to be at the last minute. Right now all of these bills have an expiration date of Friday at 6:00 p.m.—it's only a matter of time before we know which ones can make it through to the very end.

If you have any comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by e-mail at [matt\\_bartle@senate.mo.gov](mailto:matt_bartle@senate.mo.gov) or by phone at (888) 711-9278. My web address is <http://www.senate.mo.gov/bartle>.

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