

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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New DNA Law Making a Positive Mark

The General Assembly's expansion this year of the state's DNA profiling system to enhance state law enforcement's ability to solve crimes is already making a significant difference within just two months of the bill's passage.

On Aug. 28, the governor signed [House Bill 152](#), which requires DNA samples to be taken from anyone 17 years of age or older who is arrested — not just convicted — of violent crimes, burglaries and sex offenses. To protect individuals' civil liberties, lawmakers also took measures to ensure that if the charges are dropped after the person is arrested, the DNA sample would be destroyed and all DNA records expunged. Missouri is reportedly the 21st state to institute similar legislation.

The new DNA law is already making a positive difference in our state. The first case resulting in a criminal charge being filed as a result of the new law recently occurred in southwest Missouri, where law enforcement officers were able to match a DNA sample taken from a 17-year-old arrested in a recent break-in to blood left at the scene of an earlier unsolved burglary in the area. According to the Missouri State Highway Patrol, its crime labs have also matched three other DNA profiles obtained from arrestees to unsolved crimes since the expanded DNA law took effect.

You may recall that in 2004 Missouri passed a crime-fighting bill that requires all convicted felons in Missouri to submit DNA samples. Since that law was passed, the program has provided investigators with around 2,500 hits. More than 220 homicide investigations and 540 sexual assault cases have been aided by the expansion of the law. The new legislation is expected to build upon the program's success and lead to the arrest of many more criminals who have so far managed to keep their identities secret.

I'm very pleased to see Missouri's new DNA law already working to fight crime and provide more protections for our citizens. And as we have learned through increasing frequency from state and national headlines, DNA profiling has proven most effective in capturing criminals and, just as importantly, exonerating innocent people.

As always, if you have 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 phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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