



Senator Jason Crowell – Serving Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, Madison, Mississippi, Perry, and Scott Counties.

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## Protecting Taxpayer Dollars: Drug Testing for Public Assistance

For many Missouri workers, a drug test prior to employment is a fact of life. It is common for employers to choose to make passing a drug screening a prerequisite to employment. These businesses understand the problems that drug-use can cause, and they insist on making sure their work-place is drug-free. It only makes sense then that those applying for or using welfare, a program meant to help families while looking for work, should be drug-free.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a federal program administered by the state that provides cash assistance to families while they are transitioning between unemployment and employment. As of January 2009, the Department of Social Services reported that there are nearly 42,000 families utilizing temporary assistance.

Senate Bill 86, a bill I sponsored this year, would create a program to screen and test applicants and recipients of welfare benefits. Under the legislation, the Department of Social Services would have the ability to test anyone they have reasonable cause to believe is using drugs. If an applicant or

recipient tests positive, they would lose their benefits for three years.

Requiring recipients to submit to drug testing protects taxpayers by making sure that money is spent only on those who can really utilize them. In January, DSS made more than \$9.5 million in payments to welfare recipients. The purpose of these funds is to help families in tough times get back on their feet, and the state needs to make sure that this is truly what these dollars are being used for. By testing and screening those that are believed to be on drugs, the state is ensuring that the money is not going towards purchasing illegal drugs.



Drug use is a problem throughout this county, and we have to continue to fight its hold. This legislation would provide an incentive to stay clean for those needing financial assistance. If an individual knows that receiving benefits hinges on a clean drug test, it will act as motivation to not use drugs. Providing cash to drug-users is no way to help these families. For those who are unable to

fight the battle against their addiction alone, the bill also provides a treatment referral system if an applicant or recipient tests positive.

My goal is to make sure that your tax dollars are invested wisely. In order to earn a paycheck, we must remain drug-free. There is no reason why this expectation should not also be applied to those who are using welfare. This is common-sense legislation and I will continue to push for action that increases accountability for those using these programs.

### **Contact Me**

As always, I appreciate hearing your comments, opinions, and concerns.

Please feel free to contact me in Jefferson City at (573) 751-2459. You may write to me at Jason Crowell; Missouri Senate; State Capitol; Jefferson City, MO 65101, or email me at: [jcrowell@senate.mo.gov](mailto:jcrowell@senate.mo.gov) or visit me on the web at <http://www.senate.mo.gov/crowell>.

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