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Senator David Pearce's Private Jail Regulation Bill Passed by Senate

JEFFERSON CITY—A bill sponsored by Senator David Pearce (R-Warrensburg), which creates new regulations for private jails, received final approval from the Missouri Senate yesterday.

Senate Bill 44 addresses safety concerns posed by the lack of certain regulations at some privately owned jails in Missouri. Sen. Pearce's legislation brings the policies of private jails in line with those owned and maintained by the state, counties or cities.

"Many people are not aware of the existence of private jails in the state of Missouri and that these facilities are not required to adopt the same safety standards as public jails," Sen. Pearce said. "This includes not being obligated to report an escaped prisoner, which is unacceptable. We cannot allow our communities to be made vulnerable because private jails are not required to follow common sense regulations."

In addition to requiring private jails to immediately notify law enforcement in the event a prisoner has escaped, SB 44 requires an employee of a private jail, who believes a prisoner is being abused or a law has been violated, to report the incident to the jail administrator, which would then be reported to the county sheriff. The bill, among other things, also requires prisoners to be separated by gender and type of cause for imprisonment (civil versus criminal); requires adequate clothing, food and bedding be provided for prisoners; and requires private jails to meet the accreditation standards of the American Corrections Association.

"I am pleased my colleagues in the Senate recognized the importance of this issue and acted quickly to pass my bill," Sen. Pearce said. "I encourage the members of the House to do the same so we can help keep Missouri families safe from those who break the law."

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