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Senator David Pearce's Bill Regulating Private Jails Passed by General Assembly

JEFFERSON CITY—The state's two private jails will soon be subject to stiffer regulations after a bill sponsored by Senator David Pearce (R-Warrensburg) was passed by the General Assembly on the final day of the 2009 legislative session (5/15).

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

"I was compelled to sponsor this legislation after two inmates escaped from a private jail in Johnson County last year," Sen. Pearce said. "Because regulations did not exist that require private jails to report escaped prisoners, law enforcement was not notified about the escape for several hours, seriously compromising the safety of local communities."

In addition to requiring private jails to immediately notify law enforcement in the event a prisoner has escaped, SB 44 creates the crime of escaping from a private jail. The bill also requires private jails to arrange for any necessary health care for inmates, separate prisoners by gender and type of cause for imprisonment (civil versus criminal), and provide adequate clothing, food and bedding to prisoners.

"I am pleased my colleagues in the General Assembly recognized the importance of this issue and passed SB 44 before the session ended," Sen. Pearce said. "I worked with Representative Denny Hoskins to get this bill passed and I would like to thank him in particular for all of his efforts. The lack of regulation in private jails has been a significant public safety problem, and now we have taken the right step to protect our communities from harm."

The governor's signature would enact the bill into law on August 28.

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