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The Stouffer Report: Drug Testing Legislation

We hear a lot about people taking responsibility. In an age where government is monitored for the amount of money it spends, and on what, it is time to ensure all of us take responsibility. I believe those receiving help from the state should help themselves.

I have filed a bill that would require drug testing for those who apply for, and are on, temporary assistance for needy families (TANF) — formerly referred to as welfare. [Senate Bill 607](#) states if a TANF applicant or recipient tests positive for drug use, he or she will be ineligible for the benefits for three years, when a second review would be held. If a parent is deemed ineligible for TANF, benefits for his or her child would not be affected. The program would be developed by the [Missouri Department of Social Services](#).

Drug testing happens throughout the real world. Most employers use it. For instance, Wal-Mart drug tests people before hiring them. Over-the-road truck drivers are required to take drug tests at random. I take a drug test at least once a year in order to keep my commercial driver's license. Athletes also have to take random drug tests. In this case, we are talking about people who either are on or want to be on public assistance. To me, this is a common sense issue. Why is it okay for somebody on public assistance to be abusing drugs? It should not be. Senate Bill 607 simply requires the same standards to be used for TANF

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as are applied to most every other aspect of our lives.

I realize there are some folks who think I am simply picking on a certain percentage of our population. This is not the case. Senate Bill 607 has a clear goal: to help some of the less fortunate in Missouri help themselves. Drug testing will move our welfare population toward a healthier and less costly lifestyle. As I stated earlier, funding for eligible children would continue. There is no need to punish them for something that is not their fault.

There are some other bills that are similar to this proposal. Whether or not the bills are combined into some sort of compromise remains to be seen. There is still much left to be done on this bill for passage out of committee, onto the Senate floor and eventually to the Missouri House. I truly believe, in this time of economic uncertainty, we have a duty and an obligation to the taxpayers of this state to show we are spending their money wisely. Letting folks get away with abusing drugs while they are receiving government money is not the best way to do things. I pray this issue gets the attention it deserves as we continue in this legislative session.

Senator Stouffer serves the counties of Carroll, Chariton, Cooper, Howard, Lafayette, Macon, Ray, Saline, and a part of Clay.

If you have questions or comments about this or any other issue, please call toll free (866) 768-3987 or by e-mail at bstouffer@senate.mo.gov.

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