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Senate Okays “Rebooting Government” Bills

Measures Reorganizing State Departments and Reducing the Prison Population Get First-Round Approval in the Missouri Senate

JEFFERSON CITY – Two “Rebooting Government” ideas that will save Missouri taxpayers an estimated \$28 million received first-round approval by the Missouri Senate Wednesday evening. The cost-savings would come from merging state divisions and reducing Missouri’s prison population by 2,000 inmates. The measures are Senate Bill 1057, sponsored by Senate Leader Charlie Shields, R-St. Joseph, and Senate Bill 1014, sponsored by Senate Judiciary Chairman Matt Bartle, R-Lee’s Summit.

Senate Bill 1057 would merge the State Water Patrol into the Missouri State Highway Patrol and transfer the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control from the Department of Public Safety to the Department of Revenue.

“The Missouri Senate did the right thing today by voting to make real changes when it comes to rebooting state government that will save millions in taxpayer dollars,” Shields said. “We voted to make the tough call to merge our state’s highway and water patrol programs into one entity, plus we voted to move Alcohol and Tobacco Control to the Department of Revenue, since their main focus is taxation of those products. These two changes will save taxpayers \$2 million.”

Senate Bill 1014 would reduce the state’s prison population by nearly 2,000 inmates by directing offenders who plead guilty or are found guilty of a class D felony, with less than two prior felony convictions, to either a treatment court (such as a drug or DWI court), sentencing offenders to a county jail, or placing them on probation. Anticipated savings from not accepting new offenders who meet the criteria is \$26 million. Half the savings would go into the state’s general revenue fund. The remaining savings would be divided equally among the Department of Corrections, Missouri’s circuit courts, and the “County Corrections Stabilization Fund,” created in the bill to assist counties with costs associated with housing inmates sentenced to county jail.

“Missouri can continue to be a safe place to live, work and raise our families without sending every felony offender to state prison,” said Bartle. “Judges and prosecutors worked with us to find solutions on how to save taxpayer dollars while changing the way we think about inmates. These changes should lead to less recidivism among drug-related offenders, while making sure taxpayer dollars go towards locking up those most-violent offenders.”

The measure would also allow the Board of Probation and Parole to select non-violent offenders for release if they are admitted into a drug or DWI treatment court.

Both ideas originated as part of the Senate’s “Rebooting Government” initiative. For a complete listing of the program’s recommendations, or to submit your own idea, click on the [Rebooting Government](http://www.senate.mo.gov) logo at www.senate.mo.gov.

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