

State Senator Kurt U. Schaefer - District 19

Weekly Capitol Review

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Legislative Highlights from the Missouri Senate – Week of March 30, 2009

Dear friends:

Last week in the Missouri Senate, I was involved in legislation regarding the funding for building a power plant in Callaway County before the plant is completed.

AmerenUE is asking to build a new nuclear plant and to receive funding by way of rate increases in order to cover the costs of building the new facility. This bill has raised a great many concerns by many of our constituents and generated many phone calls and emails regarding this issue. Often, a piece of legislation has its friends and its foes, and this is no exception. Some of the groups opposed to this legislation began a campaign against the bill before it even made it into a committee hearing. Consumers wanted assurance that their money would be used and accounted for properly, and many feared large rate increases with little result.

The original bill needed to be altered to include consumer protections, such as requiring AmerenUE to repay customers the cost of the plant plus interest if the power plant or its nuclear permit is transferred or sold. The new bill also gives the Public Service Commission up to a year to initially approve the plant, and another eleven months to review the process.

“We are working hard in committee to address the concerns of the consumers,” Sen. Schaefer said, “while trying to forge ahead to provide enough clean energy for future growth.”

The bill moves to the Senate Rules Committee before it comes up for debate on the Senate floor. A House version of this bill passed out of committee without being rewritten and is ready to be discussed on the House floor.

In other legislation, both the Senate and the House have bills that seek to transfer the ownership of the Mid-Missouri Mental Health Center to the University of Missouri in order to keep funding to this center. Mid-Mo was dropped from state funding by the governor’s budget cuts for 2010.

The transfer to the University of Missouri would mean a large per-patient increase in reimbursements from the federal government, resulting in better care for their patients and improvements to the facility.

“We have been negotiating this transfer for months,” Sen. Schaefer said. “We should make every effort to facilitate cooperative measures between the University and the Department of Mental Health.”

As always, should you have any questions or concerns about these or any other issues involving the Missouri Legislature, feel free to contact my office.

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