



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BILL DIRECTING EXCESS TRAFFIC FINE REVENUE TO SCHOOLS, MODIFYING CURRENT LAW RECEIVES APPROVAL BY MISSOURI SENATE COMMITTEE

Legislation filed by Sen. Tom Dempsey, supported by St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann

ST. CHARLES COUNTY, MO – A bill filed by Sen. Tom Dempsey, R-23, and supported by St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann to modify current traffic fine law received first round approval in the Missouri Senate’s Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on March 27.

Senate Bill 141 requires political subdivisions receiving more than 20% of their annual general operating revenues from traffic fines to send excess revenues to the state school system. The act further modifies the law commonly referred to as “Macks Creek Law” by expanding its application to counties, removes the qualification that the traffic violation revenue limitation only apply to violations occurring on state highways, and lowers the current 35% excess revenues threshold to 20%. The act also requires political subdivisions to include an accounting of the percent of annual general operating revenue from fines and court costs for traffic violations within the financial report that they submit to the State Auditor. Any political subdivision that fails to make an accurate or timely report, or fails to send in excess revenues from traffic violations to the Missouri Department of Revenue, will lose municipal jurisdiction on traffic-related charges until it comes into compliance with the law.

“This bill will encourage municipalities and counties to be more responsible in their ticketing and accounting practices,” said Dempsey.

“Cities and counties will still be able to enforce the traffic laws as vigorously and however they want,” said Ehlmann. “This bill would simply remove the profit motive from their decision.”

(MORE)

S.B. 141 – p. 2

Senate Bill 141 has received support by organizations throughout the St. Louis Metropolitan area. Pastor B.T. Rice heads the New Horizon Christian Church and has seen its members, his church, and churches throughout the community suffer due to excessive fines from red light cameras and inconsistent and inaccurate ticketing practices. He wrote a letter to Dempsey in support of the bill. “We are concerned that these cameras are nothing but ‘money grabs’ and do little or nothing to make our streets or community safer,” said Rice.

Chip Casteel, Senior Vice President - Public Policy for the St. Louis Regional Chamber, also wrote a letter to Dempsey in support of Senate Bill 141. “We certainly understand and appreciate the need to ensure public safety through law enforcement activities, including traffic violations, but we also recognize that some municipalities may, in these difficult financial times, become unduly focused on revenue needs rather than legitimate public safety concerns,” said Casteel. “We believe that the enactment of Senate Bill 141 would be a step in the right direction toward addressing these concerns and making our region a more hospitable place to live and visit.”

Upon its passage in the Missouri Senate, the bill will move on to the Missouri House of Representatives where Rep. Kathie Conway, R-104, has filed a companion bill.

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