

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

January 6, 2006

Amid much optimism for the months to come, the 2006 version of the Missouri Legislative session was gavelled into action Wednesday in Jefferson City. Legislation has already been introduced which could specifically enhance benefits for our members and improve the lives of state workers in general.

Our Association got an early start on the re-submission of a proposal which would allow MoDOT workers to purchase as much as four years of non-federal prior public service for retirement credit. This bill, SB791, is sponsored by Senators Rob Mayer and Harry Kennedy. It is identical to a bill we were pushing which died on the consent calendar in the final minutes of last year's session. This bill also is being filed in the house and should be introduced next week.

Another of our priority bills, a more favorable and efficient conversion of unused sick leave to retirement credit, will likely be filed next week in the house.

Worker safety is another high agenda item this session. Sen. Delbert Scott has filed SB754 which would create the crimes of "Endangerment of a highway worker" and "Aggravated endangerment of a highway worker." Conviction of these proposed crimes would range from an assessment of eight to 12 points on a driver's record and fines ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

A bill similar to SB754 is expected to be introduced also in the house. While not as extensive as SB754, a bill directed toward construction and work zone safety, HB1040, has been filed by Rep. Ed Robb of Columbia. This bill would increase the penalty for conviction of speeding in a work zone from \$250 to \$1,000. Worker safety bills were near the center of attention last year but were stopped short of passing by controversial amendments that dealt with seat belts and motorcycle helmets.

Next week (9:00 a.m., Jan. 9) Governor Matt Blunt's State Retirement Consolidation Commission is scheduled to meet to discuss the merger of the MoDOT and MOSERS retirement systems. Two previous meetings resulted in no agreement for legislation which would merge the two retirement systems. In last year's session, our Association actively opposed legislation which would have merged our retirement system into MOSERS.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
Missouri Highway and Transportation Employees' Association**