

# The **Association** report

## from the **Capitol**

April 21, 2005

Our Association priority bills have progressed well and are in good position as the '05 legislative session moves into the final weeks and a May 13th conclusion.

Improved worker safety has been one of our top concerns this year and the legislature, thus far, has been accommodating. HB518 passed the house and was heard Tuesday (Apr. 19) in the Senate Transportation Committee. A revised version of the bill makes specific penalty recommendations for speeding, repeat offenders and other moving violations in a work zone. The bill also defines the crimes of "endangerment of a highway worker" and "aggravated endangerment of a highway worker" with penalties ranging from class A misdemeanor to class C felony. A committee substitute for HB518 was voted "do pass" by the senate committee.

Another bill we're pushing is SB317 which would allow MoDOT employees to buy retirement credit at a reduced rate for prior, non-federal, public service. This bill, which allows the purchase of a maximum of four years of prior service, has passed the senate, cleared the House Rules Committee and is No.52 on the "Senate Bills for Third Reading - Consent Calendar" in the house.

Other bills of concern to Association members, HB333 and SB275, would force the merger of the MoDOT and MOSERS retirement systems. At this point, neither bill is moving. HB333 was heard Mar. 30 in the House Retirement Committee where Association President Mark O'Dowd testified to voice our opposition. HB333 has not been brought to a vote and remains in committee. SB275 was assigned to the Senate Pensions Committee but has not had a hearing.

Another bill which had a committee hearing this week is SB466. It is intended to encourage eligible workers to take early retirement by offering "78 and Out" and up to five years extended medical benefits. According to provisions of the bill, the early retirement package would be offered for those who retire between May 1 and Sept. 1 of this year. The Senate Pensions Committee did not vote on the bill. However veteran observers at the capitol expect the early retirement package to be modified somewhat and amended to moving legislation. A provision in the bill gives the MoDOT Commission the option to offer the early retirement incentives to our employees.

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