

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

March 30, 2006

Legislators returned Monday (March 27) from their annual spring break with an agenda loaded with a variety of issues that could affect our Association members. Work left undone includes a pay raise, highway worker safety and several bills that could impact individual worker benefits.

At a meeting Thursday morning to promote National Work Zone Awareness Week, Don Hillis, MoDOT director of System Management, said the highway work zone safety message is starting to show promising results. He said work-zone fatalities and injuries were substantially reduced in 2005 compared to 2004. Also at the meeting it was noted that tougher work zone safety legislation is moving in both the house and senate. SB872, which would provide stiffer fines and impose jail time for speeding and dangerous driving in work zones, passed the senate on March 2 and is expected to be heard in house committee next week. A similar house bill, HB 1378, is expected to be debated on the house floor also next week.

A bill scheduled for debate on the house floor soon could have a substantial affect on MPERS (Missouri Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Retirement System). That bill, a committee substitute for HB 1305 by Rep. Todd Smith, would;

- * Require that retirement plans with a funded ratio of less than 60% must have an actuary prepare an accelerated contribution schedule.
- * Prohibit plans with less than an 80% funded ratio from giving additional member benefits.
- * Require retirement systems to establish board member educational programs regarding responsibilities, ethics, administration of benefits and investments.

On March 16th, the day spring break began, the house took final votes on budget bills that included a 4 percent pay increase for state workers. Those budget bills are now in the hands of the Senate Appropriations Committee. The senate is expected to piece together its version of the budget in the next two or three weeks. At that point, the house and senate likely will meet in a conference committee to produce a compromise version of the '07 spending plan. By law, appropriations bills must be completed by 6 p.m., May 5, one week before the regular session ends on Friday, May 12.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
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