

The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

May 1, 2006

Our Association's legislative priorities moved closer to the governor's desk last week as the Missouri General Assembly attempts to put the finishing touches on this session's work before the 6 p.m. deadline on Friday, May 12th.

Language from the "prior service purchase" bill, (SB791 in the senate and HB1495 in the house) was drafted into a senate floor substitute for HB1306 and debated on Wednesday (Apr. 26). The floor substitute containing our language was discussed and amended several times and given tentative approval. The bill had to be approved by the Senate Fiscal Oversight Committee before a "third reading" vote by the senate. At that point the bill would be returned to the house to determine if it would accept or reject the changes made by the senate.

The "prior service purchase" bill would allow MoDOT employees and non-uniformed highway patrol employees to buy as much as four years of prior, non-federal public service for retirement credit. The retirement credit can be purchased at a reduced rate. The senate is expected to finish work on HB1306 early this week.

While action last week in the senate moved us closer to our goal, activities across the rotunda in the house offered reason for optimism on the "work zone safety" bill late in the week when Rep. Neal St. Onge was recognized to take up SB872 for third reading. This is legislation which would stiffen fines and jail sentences for convictions of speeding and dangerous driving in highway construction work zones. This worker safety proposal is thoroughly understood and remains popular among legislators however it has historically gotten hung up by well-meaning but controversial amendments. It happened Thursday (Apr.27) with an amendment that would allow police to stop a driver if it is apparent he or she is not wearing a seatbelt. The bill was laid over with the amendment pending. With two full weeks remaining in the legislative session, there is time to get the seatbelt-issue resolved before the April 12 deadline.

The house and senate have virtually completed work on the '07 budget which includes a 4% pay raise for state workers. The appropriations committee conferees have but a few differences to be worked out before finalizing the budget. However the pay raise portion of the budget has been agreed upon by both sides and is not one of the issues in question. The budget bills, by law, must be completed one week before the end of the legislative session.

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