

# The **Association** report

## from the **Capitol**

January 21, 2005

Our state legislature recently began its annual five and ½-month journey with a lineup of new legislators facing difficult issues including another tight budget. Nearly one-fourth of the 163-member House of Representatives was elected in November for the first time. After some special elections to fill vacant seats, the senate will add 12 new members to fill its 34-person chamber. Some of the new senate members have served previously in the house.

This year our Association is focusing its efforts on up-dating and improving benefits and opportunities for our active, working employees. Sen. Harry Kennedy of St. Louis has agreed to enter legislation which would allow MoDOT employees to buy prior public service work for retirement credit. This bill, similar to SB1216 from the '04 session, has been refined and is expected to be filed next week. Provisions of the bill would allow a specific amount of prior public service time to be purchased at a reduced rate.

Another proposal is aimed at making the workplace safer for our employees. In addition to fines for “work zone” traffic violations, this bill would authorize the courts to impose stiffer penalties for “second or subsequent violations.” This legislation creates the crime of “reckless endangerment of a highway worker” a Class A misdemeanor. The crime would be a Class D felony if the worker is injured and a Class C felony if the worker is killed. In order to strengthen the enforcement of this proposal and existing worker safety laws, a special fund is established in the bill to be used for hiring additional law enforcement personnel. This bill is expected to be submitted next week also.

Still another piece of legislation the Association is drafting would make some changes in the way workers are paid, including additional compensation for workers who are in “safety sensitive jobs.” The bill would specify the number of pay brackets in each pay grade, require departmental comprehensive job studies aimed at keeping competitive salaries as well as adopt a pay system that has 26 pay periods each year.

I'll be sending progress reports on the legislation mentioned above and reporting on other issues that could affect our Association members as we move through the '05 session. Except for the annual spring break in March, the legislature meets weekly in Jefferson City until its scheduled conclusion at 6 p.m., Friday May 13.

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