

# The **Association** report

## from the **Capitol**

March 15, 2007

Over at the capitol, just when you start thinking most issues will be hopelessly lost to gamesmanship and partisan maneuvering, things begin to come together. In the house, especially, the usually slow grinding machinery seemed to be stuck in neutral. The weeks turned into a month or more as bills that had been filed were left “not referred” to committee. And thus there were no committee hearings to get the process moving.

One of our bills was caught in the inactivity. HB631, the house version of “prior service purchase” was finally picked up, referred to committee and heard by the House Retirement Committee last week. Rep. Charlie Schlottach who is also a member of the MPERS retirement board, is sponsoring the bill. The senate version of this same legislation, SB127, was passed as a “consent” bill in the senate and sent to the house on Feb. 22. Due to a slight difference in house and senate rules regarding “consent” bills, it is uncertain whether SB127 will be allowed to maintain that same status in the House Retirement Committee.

Also gaining some apparent momentum in the House is HB90, the “primary” seat belt proposal. Despite slow going early on, the seat belt bill has risen toward the top of the House Bills For Perfection (debate) calendar. This is top priority legislation for MoDOT that, if passed into law, is expected to save about 90 lives a year in Missouri as well as bring in several million in federal dollars to the state.

The house is expected to start putting the finishing touches on the ‘08 budget this week. This is a budget that is expected to contain a 3% pay raise for state employees. Wrapping up the house version of the budget is sometimes completed by the beginning of the legislative spring break. That spring break is scheduled to begin at the end of the work day on Mar. 15. So despite some early indications to the contrary, things are starting to come together over at the capitol.

The traditional spring break has historically been scheduled within a few days of St Patrick’s Day, a time for celebrations by the Irish. Maybe its appropriate that state legislators take a break this time of year too. By this time, the stresses of the job are starting to become more apparent and its time for legislators as well as lobbyists to vacate the building for awhile. The legislature is to resume work on Mar. 26.

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