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**A Weekly Column for the
Week of Dec. 8, 2008**

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Prefiled Bills in the Missouri Senate — Senate Bill 1

With Thanksgiving behind us and Christmas just around the corner, we are reminded that we are in the midst of one of the greatest times of the year. In addition to all of the hustle and bustle in getting ready for the holidays, the change of season from falling leaves to falling snow reminds me just how quickly the interim has passed and how soon another legislative session will begin in Jefferson City.

In preparation for the beginning of the legislative session in January, Missouri Senate rules allow members to pre-file bills on December 1. As custom in the upper chamber, each member of the Senate, beginning with the most senior member, picks his or her top three priority bills and each bill is assigned a number. This year I am the most senior member of the Missouri Senate, ensuring my legislation receives the first three bill numbers this session — Senate Bills 1, 2, and 3.

So far this year I have filed eight bills, and I'll talk more about them in the next series of columns. Let me first briefly discuss one of my main priorities for this legislative session — Senate Bill 1, which relates to preneed funeral contracts.

During the interim — the time between legislative sessions — the Joint Committee on Preneed Funeral Contracts met to create a comprehensive study and analysis of the consumer and economic impact on the preneed funeral contract industry in our state. The committee was also charged with determining the need for changes in statutory law regarding preneed funeral contracts, as well as making any other recommendations to the General Assembly relating to its findings.

Many states regulate preneed funeral contracts. These regulations grant citizens certain rights as consumers. Pre-paying for funerals in advance, often called pre-need, is what sparks many of these state regulations. As chair of the Joint Committee on Preneed Funeral Contracts, it became apparent that regulating the sale of these contracts and agreements is more complicated than regulating the sale of other types of consumer products.

Even though more and more Missourians are making advanced funeral plans for themselves and loved ones in order to ease the burden and relieve unwanted stress at a time of grief for family and friends, the biggest complication with these contracts deals with the length of time between signing the agreement and the need for the services in the contract.

Senate Bill 1 amends state statues by adding 34 new sections regarding preneed funeral contracts, including penalty provisions up to a Class C felony for those who take advantage of vulnerable citizens in their time of stress and grief.

In the upcoming weeks, I will inform you about other important pieces of legislation I have filed for the 2009 legislative session. For more information on Senate Bill 1, or if you have comments or questions about any other matter involving state government, please feel free to contact me at 573-751-8793 or by e-mail at: delbertscott@senate.mo.gov.

Senator Delbert Scott represents the people of Barton, Benton, Cedar, Dallas, Henry, Hickory, Pettis, Polk and St. Clair counties in the Missouri Senate.

