

# The **Association** report

from the **Capitol**

May 17, 2010

It was an unusual legislative session that just ended (Friday 6:00 p.m. May 14th) in Jefferson City. With the exception of a “no texting while driving” bill, it seems we spent weeks on end defending employee benefits.

Specifically I speak of proposals to eliminate state holidays and a drastic revision of the MPERS and MOSERS retirement systems. In the end, none of these legislative proposals passed.

Legislation to eliminate holidays commemorating the birthdays of President Truman and Lincoln sat for several weeks on the house debate schedule, positioned for a decisive vote. Both HB 1677 and HB 1268 were innocuous house bills (consent bills) that went to the senate where they were amended with the holiday language and sent back to the house.

The house never did take a final vote on the bills. Much of the credit for that, I believe, should go to our Association members who called and emailed legislators as well as your Association lobbyists in the Capitol who made repeated contact with house members. Thank you for your help on this “benefit” issue which would affect all state employees.

The evolution of the retirement overhaul issue had some similarities to the holiday proposals. HB2357 left the house as a relatively obscure investment-related proposal and came back from the senate treating the state’s future employees by a new set of rules, essentially the contents of SB714. This included requiring new employees to contribute to their retirement fund.

It would have also allowed investing personnel to work jointly for MPERS and MOSERS. It seemed that quite a number of legislators, possibly a majority of the house, believed this and other parts of the new retirement concept needed a more thorough examination. This bill did not come up for a vote in the house.

SB701 would have outlawed texting while driving for persons of all ages. Current law prohibits texting by persons 21 and younger. Our Association decided to pursue the texting ban for all drivers in an effort to make highway construction zones safer for our workers. We testified for the bill, SB701, in committee where it was voted “do pass.” However, it and similar proposals did not make it across the Friday night finish line to advance to the governor's desk.

The holiday and retirement issues discussed were introduced because they were expected to save money for the state. Unless the economy improves substantially before the next legislative session, I believe we can expect to see their return in 2011.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist  
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