

CAPITOL REPORT

**Representative
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District 141**

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Drug Testing for Welfare Benefits

The Missouri House of Representatives voted to pass House Bill 1377, which would prevent illegal drug users from receiving certain state benefits. The bill would require the Department of Social Services (DSS) to develop a screening process for recipients of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program. To be tested, DSS must have "reasonable cause" that a person is using illegal substances.

In tough economic times your hard earned tax dollars should not be spent on those abusing the system and using your money for illegal drugs. Many employers, including the military and the federal government, require drug testing to be employed. There is no excuse for welfare recipients not to live up to the same standard. This legislation will help cut costs and ensure that your money is used in the best way possible.

It is very important that we help our state's most needy citizens. Most of these citizens are responsible, hard-working members of society, just trying to keep their heads above water. On the contrast, there are a small number of those who take advantage of the system.

Under this program, applicants and recipients who test positive for the use of an illegal substance will be referred to a treatment program for substance abuse. If the individual completes the treatment program in a reasonable amount of time and tests negative for drug use, they can regain eligibility for welfare benefits.

However, if the individual fails to complete the program or after completing the program still continues to test positive in subsequent drug tests, the DSS can, after a departmental administrative hearing, declare the individual ineligible for TANF benefits for one year. Their children could continue to receive benefits, but under third party supervision.

During debate on the House floor, an amendment was added to the bill that requires all members of the General Assembly, state elected officials and elected judges, to take a drug test before being sworn into office, and once every two years after that. The House overwhelmingly supported the amendment, feeling that elected officials should be held responsible if they are found to be taking illegal drugs.

If this bill passes the Senate and is signed by the Governor, it will make a difference. Not only will this bill reduce the size of government, but it will get those abusing the system off the government dole and ensure they get the help they need.

I still have copies of the Missouri Manual (Blue Book) available. Please let me know if you would like to receive a free copy.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.

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