

NEWS RELEASE



State Rep. Luke Scavuzzo

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Rep. Scavuzzo seeks to end political patronage at license fee offices

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. – State Rep. Luke Scavuzzo today filed legislation to eliminate the outdated practice of awarding contracts to run the state’s license fee offices as political patronage to supporters of the governor. Scavuzzo filed a similar bill, HB 638, last year.

Under Scavuzzo’s bill, first preference for contracts would be given to foundations that support local public school districts or other charitable organizations. If no such group is interested in a particular contract, it would be awarded through a competitive bidding process. Missouri has 183 fee offices.

“Since every Missourian who drives must periodically renew their driver’s license or vehicle plates, fee office operators enjoy a captive customer base,” said Scavuzzo, D-Harrisonville. “The profits from these offices should benefit local schools and communities, not line the pockets of the governor’s campaign donors.”

Governors of both parties have awarded the contracts as patronage. However, Gov. Matt Blunt expanded the system upon taking office in 2005 by converting the 11 state-run license offices – which were among the largest and most profitable – into patronage plums.

For several years, House Democrats have pushed legislation to end the patronage system. Despite initial resistance, several Republican lawmakers now support fee office reform. Alleged improprieties in the awarding of contracts by the Blunt administration led to the resignation of the Blunt’s gubernatorial appointments director in the summer of 2006.

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