

PRESS RELEASE



State Representative Rachel Storch District 64

State Capitol – Room 105-i
Jefferson City, MO 65101-6806



**For Immediate Release:
February 24, 2005**

**For more information contact:
Rachel Storch at (573)751-1400**

Representative Storch files Ethics legislation

Bill filed will strengthen Missouri laws prohibiting bribery of public servants.

JEFFERSON CITY – Representative Rachel Storch (D-St. Louis) announced today that she has filed legislation to strengthen the Missouri law that prohibits bribery of public servants. Storch's bill would specify that it is illegal for an individual to offer any benefit in return for an official appointment, including a committee appointment.

Storch's legislation comes on the heels of a letter sent by Representative Jane Cunningham (R-Chesterfield) to Republican legislators that cites her ability to raise money for Republican candidates as a criterion for committee chairmanship.

In a letter that Cunningham circulated around the Capitol prior to her selection as the committee's chair, Cunningham argued that her ability to raise money from a pro-education voucher group called All Children Matter (ACM) should ensure her the top spot. At one point, Cunningham wrote:

"I was able to attract the . . . generous PAC money . . . because of my chairmanship of the Missouri House Education Committee. Remaining in that leadership position will help secure the continuation of these benefits to our caucus."

Attached to that letter were two pages detailing campaign contributions raised by Cunningham on behalf of Republicans at all levels, including nearly \$200,000 in donations and independent expenditures for Matt Blunt's campaign for Governor and \$81,954 for the House Republican Campaign Committee and individual Republican House members.

"I believe, and I think most Missourians believe, that it is unethical and inappropriate for a legislator to compromise his or her position as committee chair for the purpose of raising campaign funds," stated Storch, "but it is tantamount to bribery to assure future benefits based on official actions – and, in my view, that applies to promises made to special interest groups, or to fellow legislators."

"This bill will make it absolutely crystal clear that it is inappropriate and unacceptable for legislators to 'buy' committee chairmanships," Storch said. "Members of the Missouri House should not be able to purchase chairmanships or other official positions with promises of campaign donations."

"While I believe that current law already prohibits such quid pro quos, it seems that other legislators may need clarification. Apparently, we need to toughen up our laws so that this scenario never arises again," said Storch.

"The people of this state want and deserve good government. They need to know that government is not for sale, and that special interests do not have special access in the halls of the Capitol," commented Storch.

Storch and other legislators have called on Cunningham to step down from her committee chairmanship.

Storch's bill is HB 644.

###