

Construction Work In Progress Speech Delivered on Floor of Missouri State Senate

We live in a republic made up of democratic states. An essential element of that democracy is the ability to take important issues directly to the voters—the very citizens that are the heart and soul of this great state and nation—so that they may have their voice heard where there would normally be silence. At times it is difficult to remember that we (senators; elected representatives) serve at the pleasure of the voters. Though they have chosen each of us for our abilities to help them in making important decisions, the great responsibility that each of us carries should not give us license to turn a deaf ear to those voters, especially when they have already spoken in a resounding voice that they do not want us to implement Construction Work In Progress. At the very least, we owe them the opportunity to reaffirm their clear opposition to this inefficient piece of legislation through another statewide vote.

Unfortunately, some of our colleagues would not afford the voters that opportunity. The voters have previously delivered a mandate to us by a 2-to-1 margin to oppose any form of CWIP legislation proposed. The reasons for this mandate are numerous. CWIP would allow utilities to unilaterally raise rates to pay for projects that could become budgetary nightmares, with few or no repercussions for the utilities. Voters have already made their thoughts well-known: they do not want to be charged for capacity or service that they do not currently receive. The voters recognized that if CWIP was passed, they would bear the planning costs of projects that may never get off the ground. The risk would be shifted to the ratepayers—the very voters who shunned that risk in the first place! There would be no accountability or oversight, and utility companies would have free reign to charge consumers whatever they pleased in order to drive up capacity. The voters recognized this lack of accountability, and resoundingly voted to ban these irresponsible, highly

speculative rate increases. To not give them the chance to confirm their already-expressed displeasure is insulting to the ideals of democracy.

We are the duly elected representatives of these very voters that some of us wish to disenfranchise without so much as a whisper on their behalf. This country is founded upon the fundamental principle that this is to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. It is not meant to be a government of the utilities, by the utilities, and for the utilities. It is not only our job, but also our duty to give the voters an opportunity to strike down the CWIP legislation—the very type of legislation that is the proverbial worm to the apple that is our democracy—slowly eating away until it hits the core, whereupon the whole thing is spoiled. To attempt an end run around what the voters intended sends the message that not only do we not care what our citizens want, but also that, in these tough economic times, we want to force them to pay for potentially expensive, excessive, and experimental projects that may never see the light of day without even asking for their approval. We need to listen to that clear voice, that resounding voice of the voters that put each and every one of us into office so that we could uphold the ideals that voters hold dear—not to turn our backs on them and leave them fumbling in the dark. For if we do not heed the voters' cries for accountability, if we do not give them the opportunity to once again express themselves in the voting booth, who will be the ones that are eventually held accountable? Certainly not those of us that enabled them to be heard. Therefore, at the very least, it is crucial for us to allow the voters to decide this issue for themselves with another ballot initiative. Then, and only then, will the voice of the voters truly be heard. Thank you.