

# A Senator in the Classroom

by Robby Dardeau

State Senator Jonathan Perry recently visited a Civics class taught by former legislator, Sammy Theriot, at North Vermilion High School in Maurice. As part of the Legislators' Back To School Program, sponsored by the National Conference of State Legislatures, his visit's purpose was "to meet personally with his young constituents and to answer questions, share ideas, listen to concerns and impart a greater understanding of the legislative processes necessary for developing effective public policy and engaged citizens."

Attempting to educate the students on the legislative process, Senator Perry divided the class into Senators and Representatives, and had them come up with a mock bill that most teenagers could relate to - food. To be more specific, their bill was about pizza, covering type of crust, kinds of ingredients, and restaurant from where it is made. Just like in Ba-

ton Rouge amongst the politicians, these students found out that agreeing on a bill is not easy. The room was divided. This analogy gave them the opportunity to see how amendments added to a bill can kill it, and how changes can be made at the last minute that appear unfair. They were also given a clear lesson on the importance of compromise in passing bills.

Senator Perry then answered questions from the class. One student asked, "What is the hardest thing about being a Senator?" Senator Perry responded, "Trying to get everyone to understand the meaning of a bill." He explained how many people jump to conclusions before trying to understand what a bill is about, and also touched on how misinformation is sometimes given to the public just so a bill gets killed. "People being mean and hateful to my family because of something I'm doing in the legislature," and "time away



**North Vermilion Sophomore, Tyler Trahan, introduced Senator Jonathan Perry to his Civics class.**

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from family" are two other examples the Senator gave as being challenging.

When asked what his favorite part of the job as Senator is, Perry answered, "When I help someone that nobody else could help." He was also asked what bills were most important to him. He explained that those dealing with drunk driving were saying, "I feel our laws are lax."

Those fifty minutes in the classroom were way too short to cover everything that could have been said, but at least this Civics class got a taste of what goes on in Baton Rouge. One thing they should remember is that passing a bill isn't easy business. It's more difficult than getting twenty something students to agree on pizza, and that certainly didn't turn out well.



**Senator Perry explained to the class what happens to a bill during the legislative process.**