



# LOUISIANA SENATE

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## **SEN. THOMPSON GAINS APPROVAL OF KEY PUBLIC SAFETY PROPOSALS**

### **SENATE JUDICIARY C COMMITTEE GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO SENATE BILLS 72 AND 52**

At the urging of District 34 State Senator Francis Thompson (D-Delhi), members of the Senate Judiciary C Committee approved two bills aimed at addressing important public safety issues. One measure continues Sen. Thompson's efforts to make sure military funeral services are not disrupted or obstructed by protestors. The other bill changes state law to treat the crime of bringing controlled dangerous substances to a correctional facility as a crime of drug distribution.

Senate Bill 72 by Sen. Thompson establishes a buffer zone around funeral, memorial or burial services. From two hours before the event to two hours afterward, protests within 300 feet of the service and any form of disruption within 500 feet will be prohibited.

"Back in 2006, I successfully pushed for a new state law to ban the disruption or obstruction of a funeral procession in response to continued threats by certain groups to cause a disturbance at the funerals of veterans and fallen soldiers. Since that time court rulings have suggested that establishing a buffer zone might be a better approach to the problem, considering the constitutional issues involving free speech. I have brought Senate Bill 72 to that end," Sen. Thompson said. "We must do everything we can in Louisiana to make sure that our veterans and fallen heroes are not disrespected or dishonored in any way."

The second public safety measure, Senate Bill 52, addresses a growing problem in corrections facilities across the state - the introduction of controlled dangerous substances into prisons. With the proposed new law, a person who brings controlled dangerous substances to a corrections facility will face distribution charges with increased fines and prison time. Last year at the Louisiana State Penitentiary alone, over 200 offenders tested positive for drugs and 140 cases relating to controlled dangerous substances at the prison were referred to the district attorney for prosecution.

"This is not something that is happening occasionally," Sen. Thompson said. "It is fairly clear that someone who brings a controlled dangerous substance to a prison is not bringing the drugs for his or her own use. They are planning to distribute the drugs to someone and should be treated as any other person accused of intending to distribute a dangerous substance."

In addition to the public safety measures considered during the third week of the 2013 Regular Session, Sen. Thompson, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture and Rural Development, also moved forward with two bills relating to the agriculture industry in Louisiana. Senate Bill 168 merges the Seed Commission and the Feed, Fertilize and Agriculture Liming Commission to form the Agricultural Chemistry and Seed Commission. The bill is a part of on-going streamlining efforts in the operations of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture.

Senate Bill 187, also by Sen. Thompson, exempts veterinarians from the Prescription Monitoring Program, which is designed to prevent doctor or pharmacy "shopping" by drug abusers, a problem that generally does not occur in veterinary medicine. Additionally, veterinarians already report controlled substances to the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Board of Veterinary Examiners. Law enforcement has access to those reports.

The 2013 Regular Session began April 8th and must end by June 6th.

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