



NEWS RELEASE

St. Charles County Government

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County Says Fees Collected Here Should Stay Here

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Charles County _ Fees paid by residents and others for services performed by St. Charles County Sheriff's Department Deputies should remain in St. Charles County, and not be distributed elsewhere in the state to increase the pay for deputies in other counties.

That, in essence, is the position held by St. Charles County Executive Steve Ehlmann, who expressed strong disagreement with a ruling Wednesday by a Cole County circuit judge.

Ehlmann said he believes that fees collected for serving papers in civil cases should go to benefit the deputies of St. Charles County, not an outstate county that has chosen to underpay its own deputy sheriffs.

That belief caused Ehlmann and his Director of Administration Chuck Gross to bring suit last fall after the Missouri General Assembly passed House Bill 2224, which authorized the state to take a newly imposed \$10 fee for service on the work of the county paid deputy sheriffs.

St. Louis County joined St. Charles County in the suit. The two counties contended (1) that fees for service of court papers are county funds belonging to the county that does the work and (2) that the Legislature failed to establish any standards to decide what counties would get the funds. On Wednesday, the Cole County circuit court ruled that the funds were state funds and that the issue of the lack of standards would not be ripe for a court to hear until the General Assembly appropriated the funds.

Ehlmann indicated that the County would appeal the ruling to the Missouri Supreme Court, and when the General Assembly moves to appropriate the money, the County would re-file the standards issue.

Ehlmann expressed his frustration with the statute because the money collected would have freed up funds to increase the compensation of St. Charles County deputies.

"This statute appeared to give us \$150,000 a year to benefit our own deputy sheriff compensation and benefits, but instead will be funneled to some unknown outstate county," he said.

What is doubly frustrating for Ehlmann is that St. Charles County has worked hard to increase compensation for its deputies and bring them into a competitive range with other St. Louis area law enforcement agencies.

Ehlmann pointed out that it is a county's job to pay its employees adequately. Some have suggested that the new law took from the rich counties and gave to the poor counties. Ehlmann preferred to call it "socialism, pure and simple."

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