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# Birds of a feather off the mark

Sunshine Law should apply to lawmakers' offices in Jefferson City.

What's good for the goose might not be so good for the gander after all — at least not in Jefferson City.

House lawmakers voted Tuesday to require many kinds of government bodies to be more accessible to citizens.

But a majority failed to pass an amendment sponsored by Jake Zimmerman to clarify that the Sunshine Law applies to their individual offices, too.

We applaud the movement forward of HB316. It would create earlier notice requirements for certain public meetings, increased fines for those who violate the law and more openness at the Missouri Ethics Commission.

But those representatives who passed the bill while hypocritically opposing Zimmerman's amendment deserve some vigorous feather-ruffling. They include many Southwest Missouri Republicans.

Read the names of the "ayes" and "nays" by clicking on this editorial at News-Leader.com. Make your views known by

finding the lawmakers' contact information at [www.house.mo.gov](http://www.house.mo.gov).

The amendment failed by a close vote, 81 to 79.

On the plus side, that shows that about half the representatives welcome increased access to their records. And, for a while, it looked like enough of the other lawmakers would agree that the amendment would pass.

In the end, an argument that it was too broad prevailed.

In part, lawmakers worry their e-mails would become public record. Also, many law-

No court has had to yet address its applicability to individual lawmakers, said Missouri Press Association Attorney Jean Maneke.

Still, lawmakers shouldn't need a judge or a court edict to understand these simple words spoken by Zimmerman, D-Olivette, on Tuesday.

"Openness in government is important, and it starts at home," he said. "If we expect local governments around the state to be transparent, we should hold ourselves to the same standard."

Playing loosey-goosey with this simply shouldn't fly.

## OUR VOICE

This editorial is the view of the News-Leader Editorial Board.

makers insist that as individual members of a larger body they are exempt from the Sunshine Law.

Part of the law's language says it governs the actions of any "public governmental body" in the state. But another part says it applies more broadly, to "any ... governmental entity created by the constitution or statutes of the state."

## Obama questions

President Obama is scheduled to spend part of his 100th day in office in St. Louis.

In 100 words or less, if you had a chance to ask him a question, what would it be?

Send your suggestion to [letters@News-Leader.com](mailto:letters@News-Leader.com).

Please include your full name, city of residence, phone number and, if possible, a photo of yourself.

