

Legislature should toughen regulations for bond agents

Mishaps, abuse of power make need for change evident

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The house of Roberta and Allen Cox was mistakenly invaded by bondsmen in November 2009. The two bond agents are now facing charges. / News-Leader archives/2011

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Springfield has once again seen a serious incident involving a licensed bail bond agent.

This is not the first such occurrence, and it prompts us to call for legislative action to strengthen regulation of the industry in Missouri. Such legislation was proposed in several bills before the General Assembly during this year's session but failed.

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An April 18 shooting left John James Jr. wounded as he allegedly was fleeing from a licensed agent. But the agent, Jackie Rutter, was not the shooter. James was "accidentally" shot by Derek Crain who told investigators he was working for the bail bond agent when James tried to avoid apprehension.

This was not the only incident News-Leader reporter Jess Rollins reported in stories that published May 22. Allen and Roberta Cox also related a separate case where two bondsmen forced their way into the wrong home in Springfield while seeking a fugitive in 2009. The Coxes and their three teenage children were held at gunpoint and threatened. The two bondsmen have been charged with several crimes including felony weapons violations. Over the years the behavior of some other bondsmen have made headlines.

And, as Greene County Judge Dan Conklin has said, "Bond agents are losing credibility."

That isn't to say that these licensed businesses are typically abusing their extraordinary powers. They do not. As Rollins pointed