



**CAPITOL REPORT**  
**DALE WRIGHT**  
**DISTRICT 116**  
**MISSOURI HOUSE OF**  
**REPRESENTATIVES**



**COMMITTEES**

**October 15, 2021**

\*CONSENT & HOUSE PROCEDURES  
\*CORRECTIONS AND  
PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS  
\*HEALTH & MENTAL HEALTH  
\*PENSIONS

Dear Friends,

**Gas Tax to Increase but Refunds Will Be Available ([SB 262](#))**

On October 1st, Missouri's gas tax went into effect for the first time in 25 years, but Missourians who don't want to pay the increase have a way to opt out. The gas tax increase became law when Governor Mike Parson signed Senate Bill 262.

The tax increased 2.5 cents October first, with more incremental increases every July 1 until it reaches a total increase of 12.5 cents in 2025 when it will finally expire. The Department of Transportation estimates the increase, when fully implemented, will generate another \$460 million annually, meant exclusively for repairing the state's roads and bridges.

Those who don't want to pay the increase can apply for a refund. The Department of Revenue will provide a form for applicants to fill out, either digitally or by paper copy, by the time applications can be accepted between July 1 and September 30 of next year.

Fuel purchased in Missouri for vehicles weighing less than 26,000 pounds is eligible for a refund of this new tax. Missourians wanting a refund simply need to save their fuel receipts, in case they are audited by the Department of Revenue, and then fill out the form.

If our citizens wish to go ahead and invest the \$1 to \$5 per month it is anticipated that it will cost each citizen to repair our roads and bridges, then they can leave their money with the state. However, if for whatever reason they need to have that money back they can request a refund and get their money back.

The initial increase, which began October 1, has been estimated to cost about \$1 per month for the average Missouri driver. In its fifth and final year, in 2025 when the tax expires and when it's fully phased in, the increase will be approximately \$60 per year, depending on how much fuel each driver consumes.

MODOT has been running about \$800 million behind what it needs for road work each year. This increase will cover a significant portion of that gap, and will also put Missouri in position to qualify for federal dollars from an anticipated infrastructure bill.

The federal infrastructure program provides an 80% federal dollar match to Missouri's 20% participation. Our 2.5 cent tax will put us in a position to have the match money in order to pull

down those federal dollars, which is anticipated to be around \$7 billion. Without our money, that federal money would end up going to other states.

Our investment in our infrastructure will help us drive the economy and bring in new businesses to our state. Good roads and safe bridges are just one of the areas companies are looking in order to re-locate their operations to Missouri. These new companies bring new investment and jobs to our state and they pay Missouri taxes, which will give us a solid return on our own personal investment in our state.

### **Pfizer COVID-19 Booster Shots Now Available for Eligible Missourians**

Missourians who received the Pfizer vaccine can now receive a booster shot, six months after their initial series of vaccinations. Following federal guidance issued from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) has amended the state's standing order for Pfizer-BioTech COVID-19 vaccine administration for those who are eligible for a booster shot. According to CDC guidance:

- People 65 years and older and residents in long-term care settings should receive a booster;
- People aged 50–64 years with underlying medical conditions should receive a booster;
- People aged 18–49 years with underlying medical conditions may receive a booster; and
- People aged 18-64 years who are at increased risk for COVID-19 exposure and transmission because of occupational or institutional setting (e.g. frontline medical workers, teachers, and first responders) may receive a booster.

The list of medical conditions categorized as high-risk by the CDC is available at the following link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>. Missourians with an underlying medical condition are encouraged to speak with their healthcare provider about whether a booster shot is right for them.

Federal health experts are still reviewing data from Moderna and Johnson & Johnson (Janssen) and will decide when recipients may be eligible for a booster shot. Missouri providers will administer Moderna and Johnson & Johnson booster shots when they are recommended.

Pfizer COVID-19 booster shots will be administered anywhere the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is available. Individuals do not need to get their booster shot at the same location they received their initial series. Those seeking a booster shot can visit [MOStopsCovid.com](https://www.mostopsCovid.com) to find a nearby provider and schedule an appointment or locate a walk-in clinic. Individuals should only get a booster shot when it is recommended and not earlier.

Individuals can also get the flu shot at the same time they receive the COVID-19 booster shot. Flu vaccines are now becoming available through various providers throughout the state, and it is recommended annually for everyone 6 months and older.

How Missourians can get a free COVID-19 vaccine:

- Check for vaccine appointments at [Vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov), where you can search for availability by vaccine type (e.g., Pfizer).
- Call the CDC's COVID-19 vaccine hotline at 1-800-232-0233 (or TTY 1-888-720-7489). Help is available in multiple languages.
- Locate local vaccination events in Missouri at [MOStopsCovid.com](https://www.mostopsCovid.com).
- Seniors and homebound adults can make arrangements using information at [MOStopsCovid.com/seniors](https://www.mostopsCovid.com/seniors)

- Missouri DHSS COVID-19 Public Hotline  
1-877-435-8411  
Mon.-Fri., 7:30 a.m. – 7:30 p.m.

## **Free Online Learning Now Available to Missourians**

Missourians interested in developing skills that will help them advance their careers now have access to an exciting new online learning tool. The Missouri Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development (MDHEWD) and the Office of Workforce Development have expanded their partnership with the online learning platform Coursera, to offer free, online education opportunities.

Coursera partners with more than 200 of the world's leading university and industry educators to offer courses teaching job-relevant skills in fields such as business, technology, and data science. Through this partnership, Missourians can also earn professional certificates from leading companies, like Google, IBM, and Facebook, that are designed to prepare people for high-growth, entry-level careers, including in IT support, data analytics, project management, and social media marketing.

Missourians will have free access to 4,000 courses to develop high-demand digital and job-readiness skills as they look to find employment or advance their careers. Job seekers and students can earn certificates in everything from social media marketing to Excel skills, web development, the business of health care, IT security, and hundreds more.

Missouri will offer free access to learning on Coursera through Summer 2022. To register, Missourians need to visit [jobs.mo.gov/coursera](https://jobs.mo.gov/coursera), and click the "Apply Now" button to be contacted by a Job Center team member. Enrollment is dependent on eligibility of Statewide WIOA, a benefits program designed to help unemployed and underemployed Missourians.

## **Medicare Open Enrollment Runs Through December 7**

Now is the time for Missourians who are eligible for Medicare to review their plan options and costs to ensure they have the plan that best meets their needs. The Missouri Department of Commerce & Insurance is encouraging eligible Missourians to review their plan options and costs during this year's open enrollment, which runs Oct. 15 through Dec. 7.

During the open enrollment period, Missourians have the opportunity to change their Part D drug coverage or Medicare Advantage plans. To help consumers choose the best plan, the department offers free assistance to Missourians who are eligible for Medicare and their caregivers through the department's CLAIM program. CLAIM can also help Missourians on a limited income determine whether they qualify for a Low-Income Subsidy and/or Medicare Savings Programs to offset the cost of their prescription drugs. Missourians can ask questions by phone or arrange one-on-one counseling by calling 1-800-390-3330 or visiting [missouricclaim.org](https://missouricclaim.org).

The Missouri Department of Commerce & Insurance warns Missouri seniors, health care providers and others to be wary of unscrupulous sales tactics during the open enrollment period. Protecting personal information is the best line of defense in the fight against health care fraud and abuse. The department offers these tips to keep personal information safe:

- Verify that a salesperson is a licensed insurance agent by calling the Insurance Consumer Hotline at 1-800-726-7390.

- Be cautious of door-to-door sales people. Medicare has no sales representatives, and agents cannot solicit Part D or Medicare Advantage plans at your home without an appointment.
- Avoid sales people who offer free lunches for listening to a sales presentation. Federal law prohibits offers of free meals in exchange for signing up for a plan or listening to a presentation on Medicare.
- Do not give out personal information to an unlicensed agent. Sales people are not allowed to ask for your Medicare Number, Social Security, bank account or credit card number during marketing activities. If someone calls you and asks for your Medicare Number or other personal information, hang up and call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).
- Sales people cannot ask for online payments and must send a bill. Once you decide to buy a plan and have verified the agent is licensed, then you may give the agent personal enrollment and billing information.
- A Medicare health or drug plan can call you if you're already a member of the plan. The agent who helped you join can also call you. A customer service representative from 1-800-MEDICARE can call you if you've called and left a message or a representative said that someone would call you back.
- Consumers with complaints or questions about insurance can contact the department's Insurance Consumer Hotline at 800-726-7390 or visit [insurance.mo.gov](http://insurance.mo.gov).



### **Info from the Missouri Governor's Home Page**

Click to see Missouri's Top Rankings <https://governor.mo.gov/priorities/missouris-top-rankings>

My best to all of you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the signature of the Missouri Governor, is placed below the text "My best to all of you!".