



CAPITOL REPORT
DALE WRIGHT
DISTRICT 116
MISSOURI HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES



COMMITTEES

February 11, 2021

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

Dear Friends,

The Missouri House Approves Initiative Petition Reform (HJR 79)

The Missouri House has approved a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow voters to decide what the minimum vote threshold should be for changing our state constitution. If approved by both chambers and then the voters, **HJR 79** would modify the requirements for initiative petitions to change the state constitution only after Missouri's voters give it final approval.

Missouri is currently one of only 18 states that allow initiative petition to change their constitution. We have one of the easiest processes in the country for amending our constitution. Because of that many outside sources come here and use our state to launch national initiatives.

Since the last state constitution was written in 1945, due to the ease of changing our constitution, our constitution has been amended more than 60 times while the Constitution of the United States has been amended only 17 times since 1791.

Currently in Missouri a proposed constitutional change requires the support of only a simple majority of voters to be approved. Under **HJR 79** a constitutional amendment would need the approval of a two-thirds majority for passage.

HJR 79 does not apply to the passage of laws but a higher threshold for passage of our constitution is needed to protect the basic structure of our state government and the rights and freedoms that our citizens are entitled to. Everything else should be in statute and not in the constitution.

One of the reasons this legislation is needed is because of the money that is flowing into our elections from outside Missouri in an effort to change our state constitution. These special interests, including those from out of state, have included and influenced things, sometimes with confusing language, to the point that our constitution is now 10 times the size of the United States Constitution!

HJR 79 proposes a change to the requirements in order to place a constitutional amendment on the ballot. Currently, an initiative petition requires signatures from 8% of voters in six of Missouri's eight congressional districts to qualify for the ballot. **HJR 79** will require signatures from 10% of voters in all eight congressional districts. Currently the requirement is that only two-thirds of the congressional districts gather signatures, which means only Kansas City, St. Louis, Springfield, and Columbia are all that is needed to gather signatures in order to change our state constitution and all other regions of the state are typically left out of the process.

As part of **HJR 79** an amendment was added that requires the Secretary of State to conduct a review and comment process for the general public in each congressional district no less than 15 days before a proposed constitutional amendment appears on the ballot.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

Supplemental Budget Bill Receives House Approval (HB 3014)

The Missouri House has sent a supplement spending plan to the Senate that provides vital funding for K-12 schools and the state's Medicaid program, as well as a statewide pay increase. **HB 3014** authorizes nearly \$4.6 billion in funding to be utilized in the current fiscal year that ends in June.

The bill includes more than \$2.8 billion in funding for K-12 schools in Missouri. That total includes nearly \$1.8 billion in Elementary and Secondary Education Relief funds that are allocated to local education agencies. With this, Missouri's school districts are fully funded. The bill also includes more than \$444 million for the Office of Childhood for stabilization services.

HB 3014 also includes more than \$1.5 billion in funding for the state's MO HealthNet program to avoid a funding shortfall in the program due to the increased Medicaid population.

Medicaid expansion, passed by the voters last year, is running the state out of money based on the budgeted appropriation authority that we currently have. With the introduction of Medicaid expansion in the interim between these two legislative sessions, we are running out of Medicaid dollars. This bill would fund the cost to continue all of our Medicaid program through this fiscal year.

Additionally, the bill allocates more than \$91 million for a pay increase for all state employees. Currently, state jobs have a 26% turnover rate, and a more than 55% turnover rate in jobs that pay less than \$30,000 annually.

The plan approved by the House would ensure that state employees working in direct care agencies would receive either a 5.5% pay raise, or an increase to an hourly wage of \$15 per hour, whichever is greater. Employees in other state agencies would receive a 5.5% pay raise or an increase to a \$12 per hour wage, whichever is greater.

The bill makes an investment in the state workforce meant to help retain and attract talented employees in critical jobs throughout the state.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

VISITORS TO THE CAPITOL

I truly look forward to the visitors that come to the Capitol, especially if they are from our district! This week at the Capitol was the Legislative Day for Circuit Clerks. **Jennifer Hotop, Circuit Clerk for Perry County** made the trip to Jefferson City to meet with fellow clerks regarding legislative issues affecting clerk offices and to discuss with their various Representatives regarding pay increases for their employees. Thank you Jennifer for making the trip to Jefferson City.



Students from Farmington High School representing their Farmington Chapter of the Future Business Leaders of America! It was good so see so many students from around the State being here at their State Capitol. Our students were introduced on the House Floor, visited the Secretary of the State office and were one of the many groups that climbed the 200 steps to be able to walk on the outside of the Dome!

I am very proud of these Students being involved in their High School's FBLA. This group of students will be the future leaders of our Country! I enjoyed meeting all of them and want to thank their Advisor, Carolyn Strobl for her dedication to this program.



Representative Mike Henderson, myself and Representative Jamie Burger met with Members of the Missouri Coalition of Recovery Support Providers to discuss their strong support of HB 2527 – A Benevolent Tax Credit for Faith Community and Peer-Based Addiction Recovery Programs in Missouri. To read more about this bill, click [HB 2527](#)

My best to all of you!