



CAPITOL REPORT
DALE WRIGHT
DISTRICT 116
MISSOURI HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES



COMMITTEES

March 14, 2022

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



Right to Life Advocacy Day at the Capitol

Missouri House Concludes First Half of 101st Legislative Session

The members of the Missouri House of Representatives completed the first half of the legislative session with a flurry of activity that resulted in the passage of several legislative priorities. As members headed into the mid-session break, we were able to approve bills giving parents more control over their children's educational options, protecting the rights of patients, and safeguarding the integrity of the elections process.

The priorities passed during the final week before the break join a long list of legislative accomplishments produced by the House. So far during the 2022 legislative session, House members approved bills protecting Missourians from burdensome mandates, preventing efforts to defund law enforcement, strengthen the Second Amendment rights of law-abiding gun owners, support and promote Missouri agriculture, and provide critical funding to the state's K-12 education system. Members also approved a new congressional map based on the latest Census data, backed efforts to reform Missouri's initiative process, and supported proposed

reforms for the state's Medicaid program. In total, the House approved and sent nearly 40 pieces of legislation to the Senate before the break.

Lawmakers will now spend the next week working in our districts before returning to the Capitol on March 21 to begin the final 8 weeks of the legislative session. When we return, House members will focus our efforts on approving the Fiscal Year 2023 state operating budget. The state spending plan must be approved by both the House and Senate by Friday, May 6. The House and Senate also will work to pass a number of other legislative priorities before the session concludes on Friday, May 13.

Some of the key bills approved by the House during the first half of the 2022 legislative session include:

Protecting Missourians' Freedoms (HB 1686 and HB 2358 & 1485) - The Missouri House approved two bills designed to protect Missourians from mandates and would allow them to decide whether to receive a COVID-19 vaccination. HB 1686 makes it clear that public entities such as government agencies and public schools cannot require a COVID-19 vaccination as a condition of employment. It also prohibits fines or other penalties based on an individual's vaccination status. Additionally, it reaffirms an employee's right to raise a religious objection to receiving a vaccination. HB 2358 & 1485 affirms the right of employees to receive an exemption from a COVID-19 vaccine requirement if they request one based on certain sincerely held beliefs. The bill clarifies the religious exemption includes theistic as well as non-theistic beliefs. The bill requires an employer to provide reasonable accommodations for the request unless clear and convincing evidence proves it would cause an undue hardship or be a direct threat to other employees or customers. HB 2358 & 1485 also ensures an employee who is injured, disabled, or killed due to an employer-required COVID-19 vaccination would be compensated.

No Patient Left Alone Act (HB 2116 and HB 1861) –advocates for patients and protects their right to have visits from loved ones during a hospital stay. These two bills empower a patient to designate at least three essential support persons, in addition to a spouse or legal guardian, and allow the spouse or guardian and at least one support person to be present with the patient at all times during their stay. The bills also state that long-term care facilities will allow compassionate care visitation as needed by the resident.

Protecting the Rights of Those in Need of Organ Transplants (HB 1861) – The House took action during the first half of the session to ensure Missourians in need of lifesaving organ transplants aren't denied a transplant because of their political, religious, or philosophical differences. HB 1861 provides that no hospital, physician, procurement organization, or other person may consider COVID-19 vaccination status of a potential organ transplant recipient or donor at any stage in organ transplant processing.

Strengthening the Second Amendment Rights of Missouri Citizens (HB 1462) - The House has approved legislation that expands and strengthens the rights of law-abiding gun owners in Missouri. The core provision of the bill allows a concealed carry permit holder to lawfully carry firearms on public transportation. It would also allow anyone with a permit to carry a firearm while traveling by bus. This bill will not apply to property of Amtrak or any partnership in which Amtrak engages. The bill also contains a provision known as Blair's Law that will criminalize in state statute what's known as "celebratory gunfire." Additionally, the bill lowers the age requirement from 19 to 18 years of age or older for a concealed carry permit and removes the prohibition on the carrying of firearms in churches and other places of worship by a person with a valid concealed carry permit.

Addressing the Substitute Teacher Shortage (HB 2304) - The House approved legislation to create opportunities to increase the number of substitutes that are available to schools. **HB 2304** provides a four-year certificate for individuals who want to substitute teach. Under the bill, applicants for certification must complete a background check and also have at least 36 college hours or have completed a 20 hour online training. The bill also requires individuals to have a high school diploma or equivalence. Additionally, the bill provides an alternative route to certification for qualified individuals with technical or business expertise or Armed Forces experience and a superintendent sponsorship.

Services and Programs for Gifted Children (HB 2366) –Addresses the needs of the many exceptional students who currently do not have access to gifted programs in their schools. The bill requires school districts to establish a state-approved gifted program if 3% or more of the students in the district are identified as gifted. District schools with average daily attendance of more than 350 students would be required to have a teacher certificated to teach gifted education. In districts with an average daily attendance of 350 or less, any teacher providing gifted instruction would not be required to be certified to teach gifted education but must participate in six hours per year of professional development regarding gifted services and the expense of the training would be paid by the school district.

Congressional Redistricting (HB 2117) - The members of the Missouri House approved legislation that establishes new boundaries for Missouri’s eight congressional districts. The map was created with input from legislators representing their constituents, public testimony from citizens across the state of Missouri, and 2020 census data. *The* map contains compact and contiguous districts as required by the constitution while also keeping communities of interest and like-mindedness together.

Enhancing Election Integrity (HB 1878 and HJR 94) – Reinstates voter ID requirement that was approved by voters but struck down by the Missouri Supreme Court in 2020. The bill and proposed constitutional amendment would ensure Missourians present a photo ID when they go to vote, but will also allow people without a photo ID to cast a provisional ballot. In order for the provisional ballot to be counted, election officials would have to verify the voter’s signature based on voter records, or the voter would need to return later that day with a valid form of identification.

Initiative Petition Reform (HJR 79 and HJR 91) – The House has approved two constitutional amendments that give voters the option to reform Missouri’s initiative petition process. Both proposals are commonsense reforms that preserve the right of every Missourian to petition their government, while aligning the state’s initiative petition process with the United States Constitution. The amendments, if approved by voters, will require a two-thirds majority vote at the ballot to change the Missouri Constitution. **HJR 79** and **HJR 91** also change the requirements 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** requires signatures from 10% of voters in all eight congressional districts. **HJR 91** requires 8% of voters in all eight congressional districts. **HJR 91** would also implement an approval process by the General Assembly for proposed changes to the constitution.

Supporting the Creation of New Businesses and New Jobs (HB 1590) - creates the Right-to-Start Act and provides tax cuts to new businesses. It would require the Office of Administration to compile a report each year that would detail key information on new businesses in the state. The report would be provided to the General Assembly, which would utilize it for guidance in creating new policy to encourage business and job growth. The bill also provides tax cuts to new businesses that are meant to allow these businesses to keep more money in their pockets so they can continue to grow. It also creates the Office of Entrepreneurship within the Department of

Economic Development which will promote policies and initiatives to support the growth of entrepreneurship in the

Promoting Missouri Agriculture (HB 1720) - renews key programs designed to support and promote agriculture in the state. The bill extends existing credits available under the Missouri Agricultural and Small Business Development Authority, which has supported projects in 103 counties that have generated direct and indirect benefits of more than \$260 million since 2000. The bill also expands the Family Farm Livestock Loan Program so that more Missouri farmers will qualify. Additionally, it creates the Ethanol Retailers Incentive, extends the Wood Energy Tax Credit, and ensures the soybean producers' assessment, also known as the soybean checkoff, continues at the state level even if the program is discontinued at the national level.

Supplemental Funding Plan (HB 3014) - The General Assembly gave final approval to a supplemental spending plan that will provide vital funding for K-12 schools and the state's Medicaid program, as well as a pay increase for state employees. The plan authorizes nearly \$4.6 billion in funding to be utilized in the current fiscal year that ends in June. The bill includes more than \$2.2 billion in funding for K-12 schools in Missouri, and more than \$1.5 billion in funding for the state's MO HealthNet program. The MO HealthNet funds are necessary to avoid a funding shortfall in the program due to the increased Medicaid population that resulted from Medicaid expansion. The bill also allocates nearly \$99 million for a pay increase for all state workers to help retain and attract talented employees.

Medicaid Reform (HJR 117) - allows voters to decide if key reforms should be enacted for the state's growing Medicaid program. **HJR 117** asks voters if three key changes should be made to the Medicaid program in Missouri. One proposed change clarifies the legislature's authority to appropriate based on population. In effect it would allow lawmakers to decide whether to appropriate funds for the Medicaid expansion population. Another provision puts work and community engagement requirements in place for Medicaid recipients ages 19 to 64. They would be required to work at least 80 hours each month, or participate in education, job skills training, community service, or other alternatives. The proposal would exempt individuals with disabilities or serious medical conditions, as well as pregnant individuals and primary caregivers for young children or dependent adults. The final component of **HJR 117** ensures Missouri's Medicaid benefits are provided only to residents of the state.

Showing Support for Ukraine (HR 3658) – Members of the House gave overwhelming bipartisan approval to a resolution expressing our support for Ukraine and its people, and condemns Russia's attack on that sovereign nation. The resolution calls Russia's invasion "unprovoked and unjustified" and notes it is the "largest invasion of a sovereign nation in Europe since World War II." **HR 3658** condemns the attack in the strongest possible terms and strongly endorses swift and severe economic sanctions and stringent export controls on Russia. The resolution urges Russia to "immediately cease its violent, illegal, and immoral assault upon Ukraine, end the needless bloodshed, and return to diplomacy and the rules-based international order that has ensured peace and prosperity for so many." It also asks President and Congress to reaffirm the United States unwavering support for Ukraine's freedom, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.

Cracking Down on Sex Offenders (HB 1589) – The House approved legislation that ensures certain sex offenders are prohibited from being present within 500 feet of areas where children can be expected to be present. The bill applies to offenders who have been convicted of possession of child pornography.

Workplace Retirement Savings Plan (HB 1732) – Legislation approved by the House creates the Missouri Workplace Retirement Savings Plan to help the more than 40% of workers who do

not have access to retirement savings plans through their employers. The bill creates the plan, which would be administered by the State Treasurer's Office, to allow more Missourians to take personal responsibility for their future and to save for retirement.

Local Government Employees' Retirement System (HB 1473) – Another bill approved by the House provides equality for political subdivisions across the state as they seek to have a variety of options for health worker retirement benefits. Currently, political subdivisions located in third class counties and Cape Girardeau County may, by majority vote of the governing body, elect to cover certain employee classes as public safety personnel members in the Local Government Employees' Retirement System. This bill allows political subdivisions located in any county to cover such employee classes.

Special Road Districts (HB 1541) –removes the current restriction that prevents special road districts from expending more than one-fourth of the district's revenues within the limits of any city within the district. The bill is meant to allow districts to utilize their funds where the need is greatest.



Sincerely,