



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



**COMMITTEES**

**April 8, 2022**

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

Dear Friends,

**The Missouri House Approves State Operating Budget (HBs 3001-3013, 3015, 3020)**

Members of the Missouri House of Representatives have given our stamp of approval to a \$46.5 billion state operating budget. The state spending plan, which received support from both sides of the aisle, makes a record investment in the state's system of education while also allocating funds to help the state's most vulnerable citizens, pay for road improvements and repairs, invest in water and broadband infrastructure, and bolster the state's reserve fund.

By approving the spending plan for the upcoming fiscal year, lawmakers provided full funding for the state's K-12 foundation formula with nearly \$10.1 billion in funding. This represents an increase of more than \$2.6 billion in funding when compared to the previous budget. The increase is fueled primarily by an additional \$2.4 billion in federal funding. The plan also works to improve teacher pay by allocating approximately \$37.4 million. Additionally, the House plan invests \$75 million to help Missouri families address the learning loss that occurred as a result of the pandemic.

House members also boosted funding for the state's institutions of higher learning with an increase of nearly \$55 million when compared to the previous budget. The increase includes nearly \$43 million in new funding for the state's four-year institutions, and more than \$8 million in new spending for the state's community colleges. The House budget also works to make college more affordable for Missouri students by increasing funding for the A+ Scholarship Program by \$6 million and the Access Missouri Scholarship Program by \$9 million, which fully funds the program for the first time. The budget plan also includes an additional \$3.5 million for the Bright Flight Scholarship program, which fully funds the program to provide full scholarships to the top 5 percent of test takers.

The budget approved by the House also makes a strong investment in the state's transportation infrastructure by spending nearly \$248 million in new funding from the State Road Fund, which is used for maintenance and construction for roads and bridges. That plan includes \$100 million for rural roads around the state which have fallen into disrepair. Additionally, the plan allocates \$75 million in federal funds for the Transportation Cost-Share Program that partners with local municipalities to fund road repairs. The state's Amtrak service also receives funding that will allow it to resume twice-daily rail service across the state.

The House-approved spending plan also provides substantive increases to many of the programs that serves the state's most vulnerable citizens. The budget provides for nearly \$300 million for rate increases for home and community-based service providers. It also provides more than \$26 million in new funding for the state's Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), and an additional \$15.1 million for the AAAs to expand meal production capacity. The House budget also increases funding for the Veterans Health and Care Fund by more than \$6 million to help further support the state's veterans' homes. Other funding increases include \$20 million for the Children's Trust Fund for grant programs that will assist children who are victims of sexual abuse and neglect, \$2.2 million for Alternatives to Abortion, and \$5.8 million for autism diagnostic centers.

The plan also represents a reduction in spending of approximately \$1.1 billion when compared to the plan recommended by the governor, in order to ensure the state has a healthy bottom line. The House budget plan leaves more than \$1.8 billion in general revenue for an emergency fund.

While it is the state's largest budget in history, it uses significant federal money we've received in order to prioritize things like education and various infrastructures like water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure.

The budget bills approved by the House now move to the Senate for consideration. The two chambers have until Friday, May 6 to come to a final agreement on the state operating budget.

Some of the items of note in the budget include:

- Full funding for the K-12 School Foundation Formula
- \$1.96 billion in Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) III funds, as well as \$443 million in ESSER II funds, for K-12 education
- \$37.4 million to bring back the Teacher Career Ladder program
- \$75 million to provide funds to Missouri families to address pandemic learning loss
- 5.4% core increases for funding for Missouri's institutions of higher learning
- \$6 million increase for the A+ Scholarship Program
- \$9 million increase to fully fund the Access Missouri Scholarship Program
- \$3.5 million increase to fully fund the Bright Flight Scholarship Program
- \$31.5 million for the MO Excels Workforce Initiative education and training programs
- \$4 million for a statewide math supplement
- \$248 million allocated from the State Road Fund for construction and maintenance
- \$100 million for repair of rural, low-volume routes
- \$10.3 million in a new Low Income Weatherization Assistance Program
- \$1 million for the Energize Missouri Small Agricultural Grant
- \$42.2 million in federal funds for the Rural Broadband Grant Program
- \$15.9 million for Missouri One Start, which helps businesses recruit, onboard, and train job applicants during expansions
- \$9.9 million to the Division of Employment Security for fraud detection and prevention
- \$7 million for grants to drug task forces
- More than \$42 million for next generation 911 functionality
- \$24.4 million to the Department of Corrections for health and mental health care
- \$299 million for rate increases for home and community-based service providers

- \$26.2 million in new federal funding for the state’s Area Agencies on Aging
- \$15.1 million for the Area Agencies on Aging to expand meal production capacity
- \$6.2 million for the Missouri Veterans Health Care Fund for the state’s veterans’ homes
- \$12 million for the Opioid Addiction Treatment and Recovery Fund
- \$5.8 million for autism diagnostic centers
- \$3 billion for the state’s Medicaid program to cover the cost of Medicaid expansion
- \$215.6 million in funding for new nursing home provider rates, which includes value-based payments to ensure the state is getting good results for the dollars invested
- \$93.5 million stimulus funds for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program
- \$46 million for the Family First Prevention Services Act, to help families safely keep their children at home
- \$2.2 million in increased funding for the Alternatives to Abortion program
- \$20 million for the Children’s Trust Fund for children who are victims of sexual abuse
- \$410.7 million for water infrastructure grants
- \$104.7 million for a new crime lab for the Missouri State Highway Patrol
- \$88 million for a new training academy for the Missouri State Highway Patrol
- \$100 million for the State Emergency Management Agency for statewide response to COVID-19
- \$250 million for the broadband infrastructure program

### **Other Bills Sent to the Senate**

**HB 2012** makes it a felony offense to use or donate fetal tissue from an abortion for any purpose other than to diagnose anomalies, determine paternity, or for law enforcement purposes. The bill also makes it a felony offense to hoard aborted human remains. The bill will enact the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act, which mandates that a child born alive during or after an abortion or attempted abortion will have the same rights, privileges, and immunities as any other person, citizen, and resident of Missouri. Another provision in the bill protects the lives of the unborn by making it a felony offense to traffic abortion-inducing drugs. The measure also makes it a class B felony if a person or entity knowingly imports, exports, distributes, delivers, manufactures, produces, prescribes, administers, or dispenses, or attempts to do so, any medicine, drug, or other means or substance to be used to induce an abortion on another person in violation of state or federal law. The provision makes it clear the woman using the drug cannot be prosecuted for trafficking. Other provisions in the bill would ensure taxpayer funds do not go to abortion providers or their affiliates and clarify that federal laws cannot affect the decisions made by the state to prevent funds from going to abortion providers.

**HB 2416** states that it is not a violation of law for a motor vehicle dealer to do the following away from the dealer's place of business: (1) Deliver a motor vehicle to a customer for a test drive; (2) Deliver documents for a customer to sign; (3) Deliver documents to or obtain documents from a customer; or (4) Deliver a motor vehicle to a customer. Supporters say that during the pandemic, this was the only way to conduct business and the customers really liked it, so the law is being changed to match reality.

**HB 2151** authorizes the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to manage child day care services instead of the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services. This bill also authorizes DESE to grant and manage licenses to operate child care facilities instead of the Department of Health and Senior Services. Supporters say the bill codifies changes the agencies have already implemented. By creating the Office of Childhood,

the state has a more efficient approach to early childhood education and can better spend state funds on programs to benefit the children of Missouri.

**HJR 131** would, upon voter approval, clarify that only citizens of the United States are eligible to vote. The resolution requires that voters cast a single vote for each office or issue. The resolution also requires the use of paper ballots and voting records which are preserved for use in any election audit. Supporters say that the resolution clarifies that only United States citizens may vote in Missouri elections and also enacts the current practice that requires a single vote for each candidate or issue and a plurality vote winner rule for political party primary elections.

**HB 2697** provides that a person commits the offense of organized retail theft if they commit a series of thefts of retail merchandise on the premise of a merchant or through the use of the internet with the intent to return the merchandise to the merchant for value or resell, trade, or barter the merchandise for value in any manner. The offense of organized retail theft is a class C felony if the aggregate value of the property or services, as determined under the bill, involved in all thefts committed during a 120-day period is between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and a class B felony if such aggregate value is over \$10,000.

**HB 1562** specifies that the counties of St. Louis, Jefferson, Franklin, Crawford, Dent, Shannon, Oregon, Ste. Genevieve, Washington, St. Francois, Madison, Iron, Perry, Wayne, Reynolds, Bollinger, Scott, Mississippi, Stoddard, Ripley, Butler, Carter, New Madrid, Pemiscot, and Dunklin shall be designated the "Stars and Stripes Historic Region of Missouri". Supporters say that the Stars and Stripes newspaper was established in Bloomfield, Missouri, and this bill would raise awareness to the historical importance of this newspaper and the surrounding area.

**HB 2143** authorizes county commissions to use a part of the principal of a cemetery trust fund for the support and maintenance of the cemetery when the net income of the trust fund is insufficient for those purposes. Under current law, county commissions may only use the interest accrued on the principal of cemetery trust funds for maintaining and supporting their cemeteries. For those smaller or rural counties that do not have a large amount in trust funds, this interest is not enough to provide for basic maintenance required. The language of the bill allows for the continued necessary maintenance of cemeteries from the principal amount of the funds when interest is not sufficient.

**HB 1954** establishes "Bentley's Law", which requires a person convicted of an offense of driving while intoxicated where the death of a parent or parents results to pay child maintenance to the child's or children's surviving parent or legal guardian until the child turns 18 or, if the child is 18 and enrolls in college, until completion of a degree or until the child reaches the age of 21, whichever occurs first. Supporters say the purpose of the bill is to punish people who drive drunk and ensure they are responsible for the children they leave parentless.

**HB 2088** establishes the "Earning Safe Reentry Through Work Act of 2021". Under the bill, offenders may earn a credit that is equal to a one-day reduction in a sentence for maintaining eligible employment. Supporters say the bill will help with the current workforce shortage and would incentivize inmates to learn valuable job skills. Studies show that inmate participation in job programs greatly reduces recidivism. The early release of inmates is also cost effective and reduces the burden on the parole system.

## Visitors to the Capitol



### **SEMO Alliance for Disability Independence Advocacy Day on March 29<sup>th</sup>!**

**It was truly my honor to meet and visit with this wonderful group of the staff and clients representing SEMO Alliance for Disability Independence. I was presented with letters from individuals expressing their sincere appreciation for what it means to them to be able to live in their own home, be cared for in their own home and maintain their dignity that everyone deserves. A special thanks to Ashley Blakely and Donna Thompson for making this trip to the Capitol!**

**Thank you for the services that your center provides!**

My best to all of you!