



CAPITOL REPORT
DALE WRIGHT
DISTRICT 116
MISSOURI HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES



COMMITTEES

- *CONSENT & HOUSE PROCEDURES
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Dear Friends,



On July 15th, Lt. Governor Mike Kehoe, Representative Rick Francis of Perryville and myself had the distinct honor to recognize and present the Missouri Senior Citizen Award to Mr. Frank Robinson. Congratulations!

House Committee Works to Address Mental Health Concerns of Veterans

House members are concerned about the mental health of veterans in Missouri, and by how many of the state's veterans have committed suicide. The House Interim Committee on Veterans' Mental Health and Suicide recently held its first of four scheduled hearings. The committee's first hearing focused on what is already available and what is being done to offer help to veterans.

The committee's chairman is a former U.S. Army 8th Special Forces Group Green Beret. He said part of his goal with the committee is to generate awareness of the issues veterans are facing and how they can be helped.

In discussing how serious this issue is in Missouri, the Department of Mental Health's Veterans Services Director told the committee that in 2019 the national veteran suicide rate was 31.6. Missouri's rate was 43.4.

He told the committee, "Even though Missouri does not have the highest rate of veteran suicide, which is a plus, we are still very high – definitely in the top ten in the nation. Regardless of these rates we know that any suicide death, one or more is too many, so the goal is zero."

The Missouri Veterans Commission Executive Director agreed that the state's rate is among the worst in the country.

"Active duty suicides are at the highest since the great depression. 176 confirmed or pending suicide deaths for active duty in 2021, 174 in 2020, 188 veteran suicides in 2019 and that's just in Missouri, which is significantly higher than the national average or the general population's suicide rates."

The Missouri Veterans Commission Executive Director told the committee the commission launched a website in 2021 to provide resources for veterans and their families. Located at www.veteranbenefits.mo.gov, the site includes helpful information on mental health.

The director said, "It's one that we know is a priority so it is prominent on our portal." He noted that the site has received 20,000 hits to date, but needs more. Veterans and families need to know that this is a site they can go to reach resources that they need."

The committee closed its hearing with testimony from the family of Lieutenant Colonel Matt Brown. Brown was a loved and well-known husband and father of three. He served in the Army National Guard, which included a 14-month deployment to Afghanistan in 2009, and was about to take command of the 203rd Engineer Battalion. He took his own life in November of last year.

Missouri Revenues Continue to Surge

As members of the Missouri General Assembly prepare for a possible special session to consider the largest state income tax in Missouri history, the state continues to receive good news regarding the amount of revenue flowing into state coffers. The 2023 fiscal year, which began July 1, opened with a bang as revenues increased dramatically from the previous year. For the month of July, the state brought in \$970.3 million. That represents an increase of 38.3 percent from July of 2021 when the state brought in \$701.3 million in revenues. The state also ended the 2022 fiscal year on June 30 with growth of 14.6 percent compared to the previous 2021 fiscal year. The healthy revenue growth will allow legislators to consider substantive tax relief for Missourians.

House Members to Return for Special Session to Provide Tax Relief and Support Agriculture

For several weeks now the members of the Missouri House of Representatives have anticipated the need to return to Jefferson City for a special session to make historic income tax cuts and extend key agriculture tax credit programs. This week Governor Mike Parson officially issued the call for the extra session that is set to begin Tuesday, September 6 at noon.

During the 2022 regular session the members of the House and Senate passed legislation to provide tax relief to Missouri taxpayers, and to extend the agriculture tax credit programs. However, Governor Parson vetoed **HB 2090**, which would have provided substantive tax relief in the form of a one-time economic recovery tax credit for Missouri residents who paid personal income tax in the state for 2021. Governor Parson said he prefers permanent tax relief. He also

vetoed **HB 1720**, which was approved by the General Assembly to renew key programs that support and promote agriculture in the state for another two years. Parson said he prefers to extend the programs for six years.

In announcing the special session, Governor Parson said, "My team and I have been working with our colleagues in the General Assembly and agriculture partners to formulate a plan to adequately extend our critical agriculture tax credit programs and pass the largest income tax cut in state history. Today, we believe we have that plan and are ready to call legislators back to Jefferson City to get to work on behalf of our farmers, ranchers, and business owners and provide lasting tax relief to every taxpaying Missourian."

In response to the call, House Speaker Rob Vescovo and Majority Floor Leader Dean Plocher issued a joint statement saying, "The House made substantive tax relief for taxpayers and support for our agriculture industry top priorities during the regular session. We stand ready to again work on these issues to help Missouri families in these challenging times."

As Parson made his announcement, he also revealed details of his proposed tax cut. His plan includes reducing the individual income tax rate, increasing the standard deduction, and further simplifying the tax code. The plan includes the following: Reducing the top individual income tax rate from 5.3 to 4.8 percent, a nearly 10 percent cut;

- Increasing the standard deduction for individuals by \$2,000 and by \$4,000 for married joint filers; and
- Eliminating the bottom income tax bracket.

Governor said his tax relief plan means significant savings for Missourians each year. Under his plan, a senior citizen making \$20,000 per year would see a 100 percent decrease in tax liability; a single adult making \$25,000 per year would see a 32 percent decrease in tax liability; a single mom with two kids making \$35,000 per year would have a 21 percent decrease in tax liability; and a married couple making \$125,000 per year would see their tax liability decreased by 11 percent.

Governor Parson also added, "Our tax cut proposal means that every taxpaying Missourian, no matter their background, income, or job description, will see a reduction in their tax liability. Every Missourian will earn their first \$16,000 tax free and married joint filers will earn their first \$32,000 tax free, resulting in significant savings for millions of Missourians. Our plan puts more of Missourians' hard-earned dollars back in their pockets and aims to make it a little easier for families to put food on the table and gas in the car."

Parson's special session call also includes the extension and creation of several agriculture tax credit programs intended to help develop key areas of Missouri's agricultural industry, the state's top economic driver. The sunset for each program will be for a minimum of six years. The call includes:

- Extending the expiration of the meat processing facility investment tax credit;
- Creating a tax credit program for retail dealers of higher ethanol blend fuels;
- Creating a tax credit program for retail dealers of biodiesel;
- Creating a tax credit program for Missouri biodiesel producers;
- Creating a tax credit program for establishing or improving urban farming operations;
- Extending the expiration of the Rolling Stock Tax Credit program;
- Extending the expiration of the Agricultural Product Utilization Contributor Tax Credit;
- Extending the expiration of the New Generation Cooperative Incentive Tax Credit;
- Exempting utility vehicles for agriculture use from state and local sales and use taxes;

- Creating the Specialty Agricultural Crops Act; and Amending the Family Farms Act to modify the definition of a small farmer.



Remembering All Our Veterans!

My Best to All of You!