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CAPITOL REPORT

February 23, 2022



Hello Neighbor,

I hope this email finds you well! It's a short week in the legislature due to Presidents' Day Monday, and the week started off with some excitement when Candidate Filing began Tuesday morning. I'm thrilled to report I've filed for re-election to continue representing the 14th District in the Missouri House of Representatives.

As a reminder, redistricting has drastically changed the district boundaries in Platte County. To view the new maps and see which district you're in now, [click here](#).

As always, thanks for checking in. Please don't hesitate to reach out if there's anything I can do for you.

Take care,



Representative Ashley Aune
District 14 | (573) 751-3618

Legislative Update

FILING TO START WITHOUT STATE SENATE, CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS

Candidate filing for the August party primary elections is set to open Feb. 22, even though new congressional and state Senate districts that reflect population shifts under the 2020 U.S. Census haven't yet been finalized. At present, it remains unclear how Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft plans to handle filing for these offices. The filing period will run through March 29.

Lawmakers had hoped to have passed a bill redrawing Missouri's eight congressional districts by now. However, a small group of hardline conservative senators have stalled the process for weeks over their insistence on an **extreme partisan gerrymander that they claim would produce a congressional delegation of seven Republicans and one Democrat**. Mainstream Republicans say the proposal pushed by the hardliners instead could allow Democrats to win more congressional seats by diluting GOP voting strength in some currently safe Republican districts.

The redistricting bill pending in the Senate would maintain the decade-long status quo of six safe Republican districts and two safe Democratic districts. The Republican-controlled House of Representatives has already approved the measure, House Bill 2117. **Without changes, the bill is just one Senate vote away from being sent to the governor, but the hardliners won't allow that vote to happen.**

If the stalemate persists, federal law authorizes any Missouri resident to file a petition in federal court requesting a three-judge panel be appointed to

SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS BAN ON PUBLIC FUNDS FOR CAMPAIGNING

The Missouri Supreme Court on Feb. 15 unanimously upheld the constitutionality of a 34-year-old state law that prohibits spending taxpayer money to campaign for ballot measures or candidates. In doing so, the high court reversed a circuit judge's finding that the law violates the free speech rights of government officials.

The law in question was first enacted in 1988. While prohibiting public funds from being used for campaigning, the law specifically allows public officials to make public comments or issue press releases regarding ballot measures. Several local governments in St. Louis County sued over the law in 2019.

Although Cole County Circuit Judge Cotton Walker ruled in favor of the local governments, the Supreme Court said **the law doesn't restrict the free speech rights of government officials but instead prohibits the use of public funds to subsidize officials' speech**. The case is *City of Maryland Heights, et al., v. State of Missouri*.

SENATE PANEL RESTORES GOVERNOR'S PAY PLAN TO SPENDING BILL

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Feb. 16 restored funding for a \$15-an-hour state worker base wage that the governor requested be included in a nearly \$4.6 billion emergency supplemental spending bill. The legislation also would distribute billions of dollars in federal pandemic

draw Missouri's new congressional districts instead of the legislature. Such a petition could be filed at any time. Federal panels drew Missouri's congressional districts in both 1971 and 1981 after the legislature failed to do so.

GOP MOVES TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PASS BALLOT INITIATIVES

Virtually all measures placed on the ballot via initiative petition would fail – even one that somehow achieved 100 percent voter support – under a proposed constitutional amendment backed by [Republicans that won preliminary House approval on a voice vote on Feb. 16](#). A second vote is required to send the measure to the Senate.

As has always been the practice in Missouri, **a ballot measure currently must win a simple majority of the votes cast to pass.** [House Joint Resolution 70](#) would drastically bump the threshold for proposals put on the ballot by the initiative process to a simple majority of all registered voters, even those who didn't participate in the election.

Although HJR 70 would establish an impossibly high threshold for initiative measures, those placed on the ballot by the General Assembly would still need just a simple majority of the votes cast. **If HJR 70 is approved by both legislative chambers, it would go on Nov. 8 statewide ballot.**

relief funds to local public school districts and fully fund Missouri's Medicaid program for the rest of the FY 2022 fiscal year, which ends June 1.

The committee voted 11-2 to advance the measure, House Bill 3014, to the full Senate. In addition to setting a wage floor for state jobs, the bill also would provide a 5.5 percent pay raise to all state workers. Gov. Mike Parson has called for urgent action to bolster employee compensation in order to stem the current exodus state employees who, thanks to a highly competitive labor market, often can find better paying jobs elsewhere.

Missouri's state government workforce consistently ranks dead last in the nation for average pay.

If the Senate approves the bill, the two chambers will have to negotiate on the differences before granting it final passage. The governor had wanted the bill finalized by Feb. 1, but the House delayed action for four weeks before finally voting to advance it to the Senate on Feb. 10. Lawmakers must allocate about \$2 billion in federal education funding to local schools by March 24 or the spending authority will expire.

HOUSE APPROVES AMENDMENT TO THWART MEDICAID EXPANSION

On a voice vote, [the House of Representatives on Feb. 15](#) granted first-round approval to a proposed constitutional amendment aimed at **undoing a voter-mandated expansion of eligibility for the state's Medicaid program.** A second vote is necessary to advance it to the Senate.

Missouri voters ratified the Medicaid expansion amendment in 2020, but Republican lawmakers attempted to block implementation of it in 2021 by refusing to provide sufficient spending authority in the state budget to cover the added recipients. The state Supreme Court subsequently ruled the constitution still requires the state to provide services to the expanded population.

House Joint Resolution 117 would accomplish what the Supreme Court said isn't currently allowed by amending the constitution to grant lawmakers the power to block services to the expanded population by withholding funding. **If HJR 17 clears both legislative chambers, it would go on the Nov. 8 statewide ballot for voter ratification.**

Black History Month

BOOKS TO READ DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH FROM THE INNOCENCE PROJECT

February is Black History Month, and so the Innocence Project's staff shared books that have inspired them to reflect on Black history. The powerful books they selected below touch on everything from how the legacy of slavery in the U.S. has contributed to mass incarceration to exploring what it means to be a young Black person in America today — plus some interesting reads by talented Black authors touching on other forms of injustice. [Click here to read more suggestions and descriptions.](#)

- *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X* by Les Payne and Tamara Payne
- *Heavy* by Kiese Laymon
- *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and activist Yusef Salaam
- *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* by Dr. Monique Morris
- *All About Love: New Visions* by bell hooks
- *Another Country* by James Baldwin



CELEBRATE 2022 BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN KANSAS CITY

Black History Month, also known as African American History Month, is a national celebration that recognizes the accomplishments of Black Americans throughout

American history. Locally, this celebration recognizes the countless African Americans who shaped KC's cultural institutions, from chronicling their participation in the Great War to the founding of the Negro National League in 1920.

Past, present and future, the African American community is vital to Kansas City's story. [Click here to see a list of special celebrations in February and ongoing exhibits that commemorate KC's rich Black history.](#)



MID-CONTINENT PUBLIC LIBRARY

Black History Month is a celebration of the accomplishments by Black and African Americans and a tribute to the adversities they face in our nation's history and present. Learn more about the contributions of Black artists and musicians, inventors and scientists, educators, athletes, and more through resources and events at Mid-Continent Public Library.

Della Lamb



Della Lamb has welcomed 335 Afghan evacuees since October. The Refugee Services team has grown exponentially these last few months to meet the needs of our clients, and we are now shifting from welcoming Afghan evacuees to finding housing, securing employment, and providing cultural orientation classes.

Since January, 9 beds, 12 mattresses, 81 car seats, and 14 pressure cookers have been donated to our Afghan friends.

[Click here if you would like to donate through Della Lamb's Amazon wishlist.](#)

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