



## CAPITOL REPORT – WEEK 10

MARCH 14, 2025

**Weekly Overview:** The legislative spring break began upon the adjournment of the House and Senate on Thursday. The legislature will be on break all next week and will resume session on Monday, March 24<sup>th</sup>.

Also on Thursday, Governor Kehoe and House and Senate Republicans held a press conference to highlight the early legislative session accomplishments. Kehoe praised the House and Senate for working together to address public safety and sending him an omnibus public safety bill. In his remarks, Governor Kehoe indicated that [HB 495](#), which was sent to him for signature earlier this week, gives law enforcement the tools they need to crack down crime and illegal immigration and enacts a citizen board to oversee the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

Two other bills were sent to Kehoe prior to the legislature departure for spring break. One bill, HB 14 allocates nearly \$2 billion to fund state government through the rest of the current fiscal year. The other bill, [SB 4](#) is an omnibus utility bill, which would allow utility companies to set rates based on future projected costs and revenues rather than actual costs.

So far this session has been the most cooperative and productive of recent memory. The Senate has yet to engage in any personal or political attacks and the vitriolic speeches that have plagued the Senate for the last four years have all but gone away. The perceived unity of the Republican Senate has many in the halls wondering if this will end up being one of the more productive sessions that the Missouri General Assembly has seen. There are many tough issues for the General Assembly to tackle when they return from break; the State's almost \$54 billion budget being one of them.

Due to the legislative spring break there will not be a report next week.

### *In Brief...*

- On Wednesday, the Missouri Supreme Court heard arguments for a lawsuit seeking to strike down Proposition A, which guarantees sick leave for hundreds of thousands of workers and gradually hikes the minimum wage to \$15/hour. The lawsuit comes mere months after Missouri voters approved the measure with 58% of the vote. A coalition of business groups and individuals argued the proposition should be thrown out for violating constitutional rules on ballot initiatives which include violations of the single-subject requirement and a lack of clear title. The arguments occurred a day after the Missouri House gave initial approval to a bill repealing the sick leave law and modifying the implementation of minimum wage.
- Work on the House's version of the state budget was halted this week as the new \$100 million accounting system is not performing as promised. The failures of a new \$100

million Missouri state accounting system disrupted plans for the House Budget Committee to put its imprint this week on the spending plan for the coming fiscal year. The system purchased in 2022 from Accenture was supposed to be in the final phase of implementation at this point, with all financial processes — including tracking for state appropriation decisions in the legislature — fully operational by September 2024, the contract states.

- On Wednesday, the House approved a \$1.3 billion tax cut plan. The 100 to 53 vote saw three Republicans joining with the Democrats in opposition. It now heads to the Senate for consideration. A key provision in the bill is a gradual reduction in the state income tax from 4.7% to 3.7% over the next 10 years. The yearly percentage point rate reduction would only go into effect if state revenues grow by at least \$175 million per year. When fully phased in, the bill’s fiscal note estimates a \$1.3 billion reduction in state revenue.
- This week, Harvard University, the University of Washington and the University of Pittsburgh are among the latest higher education institutions to announce a hiring freeze, citing the growing uncertainty around federal funding. Many institutions say they are looking for ways to cut costs until the impact of the proposed efforts to slash funding to some institutions is known. For now, higher education institutions have stated they are concerned this will hurt current and prospective students, staff and faculty and local economies.
- On Tuesday, Secretary of State Denny Hoskins announced he will be pausing the \$30,000 of funding to the digital library company Overdrive until it can prove it has safeguards in place barring children from accessing inappropriate content. This action was in response to a hearing in the Senate Education Committee on [SB 276](#), sponsored by Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold) which seeks regulation of digital library catalogs. Senator Coleman alleged Overdrive-run app Sora allows minors to access explicit sexual material.

### **Budget Update**

This week the FY2025 Supplemental Budget ([HCS HB 14](#)) was taken up by the Senate and Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed by a 26-8 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Governor for his signature or veto. The timing of the passage of the bill will allow the senior meal program to continue to provide services through the remaining of the fiscal year. Additionally, the bill includes nearly \$300 million for public education funding, largely due to the passage of [SB 727](#) whose implementation was not accounted for in the FY2025 budget.

The House Budget Committee was scheduled to begin crafting their version of the FY2026 budget this week but the new \$100 million MOVERS accounting system was unable to produce the appropriation bills needed. The system was supposed to be in the final phases of implementation, including tracking for state appropriation decisions in the legislature. If the proposed timeline of the mark-up process had been met, it would have been the first time since 2020 when the House Budget Committee finished its version of the budget before the legislative spring break. Instead, the mark-up process will begin upon return from the break.

In a press conference on Wednesday afternoon, Chairman Dirk Deaton (R-Seneca) announced House Appropriations staff drafted a tracking document of all proposed House Committee Substitute changes. Within these changes was a direct cut of \$410,000 for “post-implementation

staff' of MOVERS. This contracted staff was to provide IT support after the full implementation of the MOVERS system was completed. However, Chairman Deaton stated he was no longer comfortable appropriating funding to a system that has not yet been fully implemented and is not functioning according to the language within the contract. The system was purchased from Accenture in 2022 and was to be fully operational by September 2024.

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### **23<sup>rd</sup> Judicial Courthouse**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 348](#), sponsored by Representative Renee Reuter (R-Imperial). The bill requires those filing a civil case in the 23rd Judicial Circuit to pay a surcharge of \$45 at the time of filing. The funds from the surcharge will be placed into a Courthouse Construction Fund to be used for the construction of a new courthouse in the 23rd Circuit and will sunset August 2045. Supporting testimony was presented by JCR Strategic Consultants who stated the current building cannot be salvaged and the legislation places the burden of new construction on those who most use it. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a private citizen. Opposing testimony was presented by a private citizen.

### **Adult High Schools**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate [HB 32](#), sponsored by Representative Bishop Davidson (R-Republic). The bill lowers the age of enrollment for adult high schools in Missouri from 21 to 18 to increase access to the program and help adults complete a high school diploma program outside of a traditional secondary school setting. During bill progression, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which requires providers to report data on the completion rate of the program and excludes individuals who pause participation in the program but later return to complete their course of study. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little debate, Third Read and Passed by a 151-1 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Angel Investment Incentive Act**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 235](#), sponsored by Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill allows investors to claim a tax credit in an amount equal to 40% of an investment made into a qualified Missouri business or equal to 50% of an investment made into a qualified Missouri business in a rural county. Additionally, the bill specifies how to become a qualified Missouri business through the MTC. Supporting testimony was presented by Next Missouri who stated new and young businesses are the primary source of new jobs in Missouri and startups have created about 80% of all net new jobs in the state. Additionally, a new subset of businesses are developing and commercializing innovative technology, products and services which are engines to economic growth. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, BioSTL, Greater St. Louis Inc., City of Kansas City, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City and Codify. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Banks and Trusts**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate [HB 754](#), sponsored by Representative Philip Oehlerking (R-Ballwin). The bill allows articles of agreement for banks and trust companies to provide for the issuance of additional shares of capital stock, if such terms are acceptable to the Director of Finance. Additionally, the bill allows directors to attend board meetings by phone or video. The bill also repeals a requirement for banks or trust companies to disclose the list of liabilities and indebtedness of their board and employees. Finally, the bill repeals provisions requiring financial reports of banks and trust companies be published in newspapers and repeals provisions regarding notification of dormant accounts. During debate, Representative Bill Owen (R-Springfield) successfully amended the bill by adding a provision allowing banks and credit unions to implement having a trusted contact on accounts and allows a surcharge to be charged to payees who pay debt collectors using credit cards. Additionally, Representative Terry Thompson (R-Lexington) further amended the bill by adding a

provision which allows an alternative for banking institutions serving as depositories for public funds to secure their deposits in lieu of the method provided by current law, known as the "single bank pooled method." Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. On Wednesday morning, the bill was revisited and, with little further debate, was Third Read and Passed with a 155-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Birth Certificate Amendments**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 100](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill prohibits amending a birth certificate when the sex of an individual has been changed by non-surgical means. Additionally, no birth certificate shall be amended if the sex of the individual was changed for reasons other than a medically verifiable disorder of sex development. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 3-2 vote.

### **Candidacy Declaration**

The House Committee on Elections convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 208](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O'Fallon). Currently, the filing period for candidates, unless otherwise specified, is from the 17th Tuesday prior to the election through the 14th Tuesday prior to the election. The bill moves the filing period by one week, from the 16th Tuesday to the 13th Tuesday prior to the election. The bill also provides that if the 13th Tuesday is a holiday, the next day will be the last day of filing. Identical language is already contained in HB 507 and SB 182. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote. However, a motion to pass the bill Consent failed 8-1.

### **Career-Tech Certificate Program**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 331](#), sponsored by Representative Ann Kelley (R-Lamar). The bill specifies that any student who has met the qualifications for the A+ Scholars Program shall qualify for reimbursement for the costs associated with tuition, books, or fees associated with completion of an eligible certificate program from a public or private postsecondary institution, vocational school, community college, or certified training provider approved by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. Eligible programs include certificate or degree programs conferred by approved institutions of higher education for employment. During bill progression, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added clarifying language specifying EMT and paramedic certification are offered. After no debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 149-3 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [SB 150](#), sponsored by Senator Jill Carter (R-Granby). This the Senate companion to [HB 331](#), highlighted above. During debate the sponsor successfully offered a Senate Substitute which added additional certification programs to the bill. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited Thursday morning and, with no further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 33-1 vote.

## **Child Custody**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 262](#), sponsored by Senator Angela Mosley (R-St. Louis). This act adjusts child support, custody, and guardianship rules, requiring notice for custody transfers and prioritizing third-party custody rights. It also criminalizes false residency information in custody cases. Supporting testimony was provided by the sponsor, who stated that the bill seeks to prevent situations where a child is denied access to one side of their family due to custody disputes. The bill was inspired by a case in which a young boy, after his mother was incarcerated and later passed away, was placed with a relative who prevented him from seeing his father or paternal family. The witness highlighted that the child suffered severe mental distress due to isolation, racial discrimination, and being used for Social Security benefits. Now an adult, he has reunited with his paternal family, but the bill aims to ensure that other children do not endure similar hardships. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **Child Labor Laws**

The House Committee on Commerce met Wednesday morning to discuss [HB 832](#), [HB 1245](#), and [HB 706](#), sponsored by Representatives Jeff Farnan (R-Stanberry), Becky Laubinger (R-Park Hills), and Eric Woods (R-Kansas City), respectively. The bills are identical and modify provisions of child labor laws and provides additional employment requirements for children engaged in online content creation or vlogging. Google provided supporting testimony, emphasizing that the bill safeguards minors in online content creation by proposing an age limit increase to 18 and a \$15,000 revenue threshold. They endorsed Senate bill provisions for clearer content deletion and proactive monetization disclosures to better inform and protect young creators. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Child Protection**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 737](#), sponsored by Representative Melissa Schmidt (R-Eldridge). The bill requires the Children’s Division to place into trust any benefits administered by the Railroad Retirement Board, the Social Security Administration, or the Veterans Administration and to assist children in state custody with applying for and receiving such benefits within 60 days after placement into custody. Additionally, the bill requires the Children’s Division to attempt to place foster children within a home of the same faith and modifies the abuse and neglect statutes to clearly define independent activities do not constitute abuse. During debate, the Senate handler successfully offered a Senate Substitute to include all of the provisions contained in [SB 43](#). Specifically, the bill now includes:

- Requires the Department of Social Services to establish a program to provide a comprehensive system of service delivery, education, and residential care for youth with severe behavioral challenges or severe developmental disabilities;
- Indemnification clauses in certain service provider contracts;
- Removes youth with severe developmental disabilities and youth subject to a voluntary placement agreement from the program;
- Removes references to facilities owned and operated by the Department of Mental Health or the Division of Youth Services;
- Adds language allowing qualified service providers to be certified; and modifies qualified service provider liability;
- Modifies implementation date to start at the beginning of January 1, 2028, unless a judge is participating in a pilot project;

- Changes “shall” to “may” regarding the appointment of separate counsel in cases where a guardian ad litem is determined to be necessary;
- Authorizes the creation of a pilot project;
- Nondisclosure agreements in the event a child is sexually abused;
- Requiring law enforcement agencies to enforce visitation or custody agreements;
- Raises the age for sexual misconduct and marriage to 18,
- Increases the tax credit from 50% to 70% for contributions made to the Youth Opportunities and Violence Prevention Fund;
- Requires a caseworker investigating child abuse to identify themselves;
- Requires the appointment of GAL in the event a child’s guardian is incarcerated;
- Removes liability from a service provider; and,
- Allows not-for-profits and for-profits to participate in certain programs.

Senator Karla May (D-St. Louis) further amended by the bill by adding language to the Amber Alert System to ensure awareness is brought to missing or abducted African American youth. The bill was revisited on Thursday morning and, with little further debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 34-0 vote. The bill now will be returned to the House for their concurrence or conference to work out the differences.

### **Child Protection/Anti-Trafficking Fund**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate [HB 1464](#), sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis (R-Moberly). The bill modifies several provisions for the protection of children and vulnerable persons. Specifically, the bill replaces the term “child pornography” with “child sexual abuse material” throughout statute; establishes the Statewide Council Against Adult Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children which will be housed under the Office of Attorney General; creates the Anti-Trafficking Fund; modifies permissible statements for those under seventeen in legal proceedings; modifies the statute of limitations for child abuse damage recovery; modifies the penalty provisions for sexual child trafficking; and, increases the penalty for prostitution. During debate several amendments were adopted which added the following provisions to the bill:

- Changes the Anti-Trafficking Fund designation for the council to the actual budget language and strikes court ordered restitution from trafficking offenses;
- Allows prosecutors to access Pretrial Witness Protection Services Fund;
- Adds an expungement provision for prostitution offenses;
- Ensures juvenile ex parte language is updated regarding definition of a child;
- Requires members of House and Senate to allow a minority member of each chamber on the council;
- Closes personal identifiable information of those 17 and under who participate in municipal activities and removes the provisions referencing state parks; and,
- HB 709 Treys Law which modifies provisions relating to nondisclosure agreements in childhood sexual abuse cases.

Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Wednesday afternoon. After minimal debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by a 151-3 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Circuit Clerk Compensation**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 530](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill raises the compensation of circuit clerks for first class counties by \$5,000, second class counties by \$10,000 and third class counties by \$15,000. Additionally, the bill removes some obsolete statutes and duties of clerks. Supporting testimony was presented by the Sheridan County Circuit Clerk who stated the current pay scale is no longer equitable based on county classifications. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Cole County Circuit Clerk. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Civil Jurisprudence Omnibus**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 1259](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Hardwick (R-Dixon). This legislation would ensure that resident trusts and estates receive the same income tax deduction as nonresident trusts and estates and only applies to the extent that it is not a determinant of the federal distributable new income of the estate or trust. During debate, several amendments were adopted which added the following provisions to the bill:

- Changes the title to civil liability;
- Requires real property to have a title search performed before it can be placed into a trust;
- Adds a circuit judge in the 25<sup>th</sup> judicial district and an associate circuit judge in Miller County;
- [HB 723](#) Repeals provisions of law establishing the "Missouri Incarceration Reimbursement Act";
- [HB 543](#) Modifies provisions relating to civil detention procedures; and,
- Allows for electronic wills for estate planning, defines electronic wills and sets up the framework for procedure on electronic wills.

Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 152-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Class Actions**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [SB 47](#), sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). The bill modifies current Supreme Court Rule 52.08 to mirror the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure. Specifically, the bill seeks to address the definition of "class," the timing of certification of lawsuits and updating the notification process to include electronic means. Supporting testimony was provided by American Property Casualty Insurance Association, Missouri Civil Justice Reform Coalition, American Tort Reform Association, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Diamond Pet Foods and Associated Industries of Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee. On Wednesday, the committee revisited the bill in executive session. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 8-2 vote.

### **Clean Water Commission**

The House Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 488](#) sponsored by Representative Dean Van Schoiack (R-Savannah). This legislation would allow for more than one member with knowledge about the needs of publicly owned water treatment works to be appointed to the Clean Water Commission. It also repeals a provision prohibiting Commissioners from receiving a significant portion of their income from certain permit holders or permit applicants over the past two years. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was

adopted which added a conflict of interest clause which is standard for other commissions. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Cloud Computing**

The Senate General Laws Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [SB 310](#), sponsored by Senator Travis Fitzwater (R-Holts Summit). The bill requires state departments to prioritize cloud-compatible IT purchases unless legacy integration, security risks, or costs prevent it, aiming to improve interoperability between departments. Supporting testimony was provided by the sponsor, who stated that the bill would modernize government technology, improve security flexibility, and enhance interoperability between departments. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Conferring of Degrees**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 11](#), sponsored by Senator Lincoln Hough (R-Springfield). The bill removes a provision limiting the conferring of post-graduate degrees or first-professional degrees in dentistry, optometry, engineering, pharmacy, chiropractic, podiatry, osteopathic or internal medicine, or veterinary medicine by public colleges and universities to only the University of Missouri or those engaged in a collaborative agreement with the University of Missouri. Supporting testimony was presented by a retired professor who stated Missouri has the most restrictive degree conferring laws in the country. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Missouri State University, an education consultant and Southeast Missouri State University. Opposing testimony was presented by University of Missouri who stated passage of this legislation would require future investments from the state to assist additional colleges and universities launch their programs. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the University of Missouri Flagship Council and Associated Students of the University of Missouri. The committee then immediately moved into executive session to discuss passage of the bill. After a lengthy discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **Cotton Trailers**

The House Agriculture Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [SB 28](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Bean (R-Holcomb). The bill increases, from 40mph to 65mph, the maximum speed at which cotton trailers may travel, repeals a requirement that cotton trailers be used exclusively for transporting cotton, and provides that cotton trailers shall not be in violation of load-securing laws if certain conditions are met, no portion of the load becomes dislodged, and the goods are secured as specified in the act. Supporting testimony was provided by Senator Jason Bean and Missouri Farm Bureau, who stated that the bill updates outdated regulations to reflect modern, safer, and more efficient cotton transportation methods (e.g., round bale tractor trailers), enhances safety by reducing speed disparities on roads, supports Missouri's cotton industry—producing nearly a million bales annually and vital to the southeast Missouri economy—and aligns with federal safety standards to protect funding, all while improving efficiency in the time-sensitive process of moving cotton from field to gin. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **County Officials**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SS SB 1](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill includes several provisions relating to county officials. Specifically, it allows county corners that fill the role of sheriffs to receive that salary, allows salary commissions to amend the base salary schedule, allows county collectors to conduct tax

sales via electronic media, allows county auditors to audit and examine claims, excludes the Boone County sheriff from the current salary schedule, and changes statutes concerning public administrators. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 12-1 vote, with Representative Bryant Wolfen (R-Ste. Genevieve) being the lone no vote.

### **County Planning Notices**

The House took up and dedicate floor time Monday afternoon to revisit [HB 233](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill requires that notices of county planning board hearings be posted on the county's website and it repeals the requirement that the notices be posted at least 15 days in advance of the hearing in at least two places in each township. After no further debate, the House Third Read and Passed the bill by a 147-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Crime Offense Enhancement**

The House Crime and Public Safety Committee convened Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 601](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Lucas (R-DeSoto). The bill creates a penalty enhancement for individuals who wear a mask, hood, disguise, or other clothing that conceals or attempts to conceal their identity during the commission of a misdemeanor or felony, raising the penalty level by one class (e.g., from a Class D felony to a Class C felony). Supporting testimony was provided by the Sponsor, who stated that the bill addresses concerns about masked individuals, particularly college students, engaging in protests and committing nefarious acts like property damage while avoiding identification by authorities or their parents. Lucas argued that those wearing masks in protests likely intend to commit crimes and that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in public spaces like streets or campuses. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

The House Committee on Professional Registration convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 992](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Myers (R-Warrenton). The bill specifies that, if an application for a license or permit requires a fingerprint submission, the applicant must submit his or her fingerprint to the State Highway Patrol (MSHP) for the purpose of undergoing State and Federal criminal background check. Additionally, the bill lists the boards and committees of which this bill applies. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 20-0 vote.

### **Crisis Lifeline**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 1148](#), sponsored by Representative Tricia Byrnes (R-Wentzville). The bill specifies certain criteria the state controlled portion of the federal 988 hotline must follow when answering calls and texts. Additionally, the bill requires an annual report indicated performance measures and other measurable data. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added an Emergency Clause. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-1 vote.

### **CTF Medical Alert System**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 41](#), sponsored by Senator Angela Mosley (D-Florissant). The bill creates the "Christian Taylor Ferguson Medical Alert System" to aid in identifying and locating a missing endangered person, including children, who are missing under unexplained, involuntary, or

suspicious circumstances and who are believed to be in danger due to a medical condition that requires immediate care, medication, or treatment. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

### **Dental Hygiene Licensure**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 327](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). This is the Senate companion to [HB 56](#). Currently, the Missouri Dental Board is allowed to grant licensure to a dentist who has been licensed in another state for at least five years if the Board is satisfied the qualifications are equivalent to Missouri standards. The bill repeals that provision and allows the Board to waive all exams and experience requirements for licensure to any person who has a valid current dentist or dental hygienist license issued by another state. The bill also enacts the Dental and Dental Hygienist Compact which allows those licensed in participating states to practice in other participating states. Supporting testimony was presented by the Council of State Governments who provided background information on current Missouri Interstate Compacts and the requirements to enter into this compact. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Dental Hygienist Association, Missouri Dental Association, State Fair Community College and the Association of Dental Support Organizations. Opposing testimony was presented by the American Association of Dental Boards who stated they believe the language is too broad and vague to be enacted and this legislation is licensure based whereas [SB 109](#) is privileged-based.

The committee then turned its attention to [SB 109](#), sponsored by Senator Justin Brown (R-Rolla). This is the Senate companion to [HB 1290](#). The bill differs from [SB 327](#) as it requires a clinical exam with a hand skills component created by the American Board of Dental Examiner's Tests. Additionally, the bill differs as it includes all three branches of government into the oversight provisions of the bill and requires fees to be paid for licensure by the end-user. Supporting testimony was presented by the American Association of Dental Boards who stated they support expedited licensure while still maintaining high standards of education and training.

Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Dental Hygienist Association who stated they are adamantly opposed to giving a national group with no experience drafting interstate compacts a monopoly in Missouri. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Missouri Dental Association, Association of Dental Support Organizations, American Dental Education Association, American Dental Education Association, the Coalition for Modernizing Dental Licensure, the American Dental Hygiene Association, Americans for Tax Reform, Central Regional Dental Testing Service, St. Louis Community College, American Association of Endodontists, American Association of Orthodontists, and the American Student Dental Association and the Missouri Coalition for Oral Health.

### **Discrimination Protections**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 937](#), sponsored by Representative George Hruza (R-St. Louis). The bill defines "antisemitism" and requires public school districts and public higher education institutions integrate the definition into codes of conduct and prohibit antisemitic conduct. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clarifies discriminatory conduct, clarifies the Title VI coordinator would be investigating the institutions where incidents occur and removed the requirement that employees receive antisemitism awareness training. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 10-2-1 vote.

### **DNR Duties**

The House Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 627](#) sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). Under this bill, local authorities would be required to verify that all local codes and ordinances are in compliance when the Department of Natural Resources is considering a preliminary or final permit. The bill also states that the Department cannot deny a preliminary or final permit based on local codes or ordinances if they were enacted following the filing of the application. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-3 vote.

### **Dollar for Dollar Deductions**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 859](#), sponsored by Representative Louis Riggs (R-Hannibal). The bill would provide Missouri taxpayers some relief from paying personal property tax by establishing a dollar for dollar tax deduction on Missouri returns. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which specifies you may take the federal standard deduction for your personal property taxes on your state tax form or you may itemize your deductions, not both. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-3 vote.

### **Driving While Intoxicated**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate [HB 87](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Griffith (R-Jefferson City). The bill modifies provisions regarding when interlock devices must be installed for those convicted of an intoxication-related traffic offense. Additionally, the bill clarifies if a BAC is over .15 during the offense no restricted driving privileges will be issued. Finally, the bill enhances the penalties for driving while intoxicated. During Perfection, Representative Lane Roberts (R-Joplin) amended the bill to allow for certain intoxication-related traffic offenses to be diverted to DUI court. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited Thursday and, with no further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 142-2 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Education – Agriculture**

The House Special Committee on Rural Issues convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 1026](#), sponsored by Representative Adrian Plank (R-Columbia) and [HB 1555](#) Representative John Martin (R-Columbia). The bills are identical and ends the current pilot program for agriculture education in elementary schools and requires DESE to implement the program statewide in all elementary schools. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which combined the bills into one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

### **Education Omnibus**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate [HB 607](#), sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis (R-Moberly). The bill clarifies language regarding additional funding for teacher salaries that districts receive if the district has a school calendar with 169 school days. The clarification allows for inclement weather or authorized reductions to the number of days the district must be in session to qualify for the funding. During debate several amendments were adopted to create an education omnibus bill. Specifically, the bill now includes:

- Title change to elementary and secondary education;

- [HB 220](#) which modifies assessment testing for virtual schools and allows small schools who host virtual schools that receive the 5% administrative fee will not be penalized for being outside the required monetary limit and adds HB 941 which prohibits school districts from using a three-cueing system model of reading instruction;
- Makes a correction to [SB 727](#) to include school districts that have a board-approved school calendar that includes 169 school days and replaces inclement weather with exceptional or emergency circumstances;
- [HB 1238](#) which modifies provisions governing pupil attendance at nonresident schools;
- Adds a 5 year extension to the existing waiver for substitute teachers without impacting their retirement benefits; and,
- Adds provisions from [HB 712](#) regarding grade-school level equivalencies.

Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. On Thursday, the bill was revisited and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 144-4 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Election Challengers**

The House Committee on Elections convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 638](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Matthiesen (R-O’Fallon). The bill allows election challengers to be present during in-person voting on both election day and during the absentee voting period. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which narrows the provisions of the bill to only apply to first-class and charter counties. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-2-1 vote.

### **Electrical Choice**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 417](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill requires the PSC to allow commercial, industrial and residential customers of electric utilities to choose an electric generation supplier. Additionally, the bill requires electric utilities to provide open access over their transmission and distribution systems to all electric generation suppliers to sell electricity directly to consumers. Finally, the bill requires the Public Service Commission (PSC) to establish guidelines and procedures to move from the current electric structure to a competitive market for the generation of electricity. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 7-5 vote.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 7](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). The bill requires ambulance district board of directors to complete three hours of continuing education for each term of office and failure to do so will result in a loss of office. It requires each ambulance district to arrange for an audit of the district's records and accounts every three years by a certified public accountant and make the results available to the public on the district's website or otherwise freely available by other electronic means. Additionally, specialty hospitals are not required to comply with certain statutory provisions relating to forensic examinations of victims of sexual assault if such hospital has in place a policy for the transfer of such victims to an appropriate hospital with an emergency department. Finally, the bill expands the liability protection for the good Samaritan law. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Ambulance Association who stated they are attempting to ensure an auditory process to provide high quality care for patients. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Linn County Ambulance

District and Ambulance District Association of Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Employee Paid Sick Time**

The House Committee on Commerce convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1414](#), sponsored by Representative David Dolan (R-Sikeston). The bill would add barge employees and operators to the current list of those exempt from the earned paid sick time law. The sponsor stated this would be bringing Missouri statute in line with other states and railroads and airlines are in the exemption list. Supporting testimony was presented by Marquette Transportation Company who stated the rotation of days on and days off makes tracking sick leave difficult for both employers and employees. Opposing testimony was presented by Jobs with Justice who state the language is vague and is not restricted to barge workers exclusively.

### **Employment Security**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1281](#), sponsored by Representative Bruce Sassmann (R-Bland). The bill establishes the “Employment Security Program Integrity Act of 2024” to establish methods to ensure identity verification and outlines the responsibility of companies regarding new hires and their wages. Supporting testimony was presented by a state public advocate who stated this would help detect and eliminate fraud. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Associated Industries of Missouri, NFIB, FGA Action and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Informational testimony was presented by the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations who stated the Division of Employment Security already conducts all provisions within the bill except the requested annual report to the General Assembly. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Entertainment Districts**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 482](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). Under current law, certain counties may establish a theater, cultural arts, and entertainment district. The bill allows counties that border the Lake of the Ozarks to the list of counties authorized to establish such districts. Supporting testimony was presented by Lake Port Village who is seeking to develop a similar district such as Ball Park Village in St. Louis and the Power and Light District in Kansas City and would like to develop a seamless experience for consumers. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the City of Osage Beach, Osage Beach Board of Alderman and Lake Economic Alliance for Development. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 643](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill adds any county that borders the Lake of the Ozarks to an existing statutory authorization allowing the creation of a theater, cultural arts, and entertainment district. After a brief debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 129-23 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

The House Emerging Issues Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 1524](#) and [HB 1580](#), sponsored by Representatives David Casteel (R-High Ridge) and Marlon Anderson (D-St. Louis). The bills create entertainment districts with powers similar to community improvement districts,

but exempt them from certain petition requirements. They propose expanding an existing St. Louis Community Improvement District (CID) to cover the riverfront to Jefferson, including key landmarks, with three main goals: (1) hire private, POST-certified security to enhance safety; (2) fund a bond to guarantee ticket sales, attracting sports events and concerts; and (3) stimulate downtown economic growth, with potential state appropriations linked to district receipts, not new taxes.

Supporting testimony was provided by various community stakeholders, including Steve O'Loughlin (owner of Union Station, Westport Plaza, Hilton at the Ballpark, and other properties), Steve O'Loughlin Jr. (president of LHM), and the St. Louis Cardinals. The stakeholders expressed that the bills align with the existing Community Improvement District Act, establishing new districts to leverage both state and private investments for economic growth, with oversight from the Department of Economic Development to ensure a net benefit to Missouri. They highlighted the removal of firearm restrictions in favor of collaboration with state-controlled police and clarified that sales taxes would only be imposed with property owner consent or a vote. The O'Loughlins emphasized that this initiative, developed over two years with key downtown stakeholders, seeks to improve public safety, promote St. Louis, and attract major events such as NCAA championships and concerts, driving tourism and enhancing regional economic vitality. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Epinephrin Products**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 553](#), sponsored by Representative Terri Violet (R-St. Peters). The bill allows single-use epinephrine nasal sprays to be used alongside of other forms of epinephrine to treat students with health conditions like asthma or severe allergic reactions. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Fetal Tissue**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1246](#), sponsored by Representative Becky Laubinger (R-Park Hills). The bill prohibits the use of fetal tissue or organs generated from an abortion for medical or scientific research and experimental and therapeutic purposes. Opposing testimony was presented by Washington University who stated this would directly impact negotiated language passed two years ago. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Firearms on Transit**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate [SB 77](#), sponsored by Senator Adam Schnelting (R-St Charles). The bill allows lawful licensed concealed carry permit holders to carry a firearm on public bus transit. During debate, several amendments were offered on the bill creating an omnibus weapons bill. After nearly five hours of debate, the bill was ultimately returned back to the calendar to be debated further another day.

### **Fireworks**

The House Emerging Issues Committee met on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SBs 81 and 174](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill updates Missouri's fireworks regulations, adopts the 2022 AFSL standards, revises permit fees, and enhances enforcement by the State Fire Marshal, including inspections and permit suspensions for violations. The bill also restricts certain

fireworks sales to licensed entities. The goal is to modernize fireworks laws, which have remained largely unchanged since 1985, by improving safety, clarifying statutory language, and defining previously unclear terms. The bills aim to align state laws with industry standards and create a level playing field for Missouri businesses, applying the same requirements to both in-state and out-of-state businesses. The witness noted that Missouri leads the nation in fireworks spending per capita and that the legislation has received broad support in committee. Supporting testimony was provided by Spirit of 76 Fireworks and the Missouri Fireworks Association, who highlighted the agreed-upon increases in licensing fees is supported by all sectors, and emphasized that local regulations would remain unaffected, allowing cities and counties to continue setting their own rules. The witness also pointed to strong statewide support, reflecting the significance of the fireworks industry in Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented.

### **First Responder Recruitment**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1514](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O’Fallon) and [HB 1525](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis) and [HB 1527](#), also sponsored by Representative Brad Christ. [HBs 1514](#) and [1525](#) are identical and seek to provide free college tuition for certain public safety personnel and their legal dependents. Additionally, the bill defines “public safety personnel” and subjects the bill to appropriations. [HB 1527](#) modifies provisions governing the Fast Track Workforce Incentive Grant by adding first responders. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated this is necessary to help address the workforce shortage of first responders by showing Missouri is invested in first responders and their families. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Jefferson County Sheriff’s Office, Missouri Association of Fire Protection Districts, Missouri Community College Association, COPHE, St. Louis County Police Department, Missouri Ambulance Association and the University of Missouri System. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee. On Wednesday, the committee revisited the bill in executive session. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which combined all bills into one legislative vehicle, clarified you may access either program and not both and added a sunset. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Gambling Boat Fees**

The House Committee on General Laws convened on Tuesday evening for a public hearing on [HB 84](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Griffith (R-Jefferson City) The bill increases the gambling boat admission fee from \$2 to \$4. The increase of \$2 will be paid to the Veteran Commission Capital Improvement Trust Fund and will be tied to the CPI. The sponsor stated he has been searching for a reliable steady revenue source for the Veterans Commission. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Gaming Association who stated they take exception to the \$2 increase as they see it as a tax on casinos. Supporting testimony was presented by a state public advocate. Informational testimony was presented by a private citizen who had previously championed a similar increase for a steamboat museum.

### **Good Samaritan Law**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 738](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill provides immunity from civil liability to a person who provides emergency care, without compensation, at the scene of an accident or during an emergency, if there is no gross negligence or willful, wanton acts or omissions. The bill specifies the

provisions of the bill are not applicable to first responders. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Graduation Requirements**

The House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 248](#), sponsored by Representative Rodger Reedy (R-Windsor). The bill requires public schools to offer some form of a driver education course that students must complete before graduating. Supporting testimony was presented by AAA who stated Missouri is one of 13 states that does not mandate any formal training before opting to receive a license to operate a vehicle. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a retired former legislative assistant, Abate for Missouri Motorcycle Rights Organization, Missouri Driver Safety Education Association, Missouri State Teachers Association, Missouri Insurance Coalition and a retired teacher. No opposing testimony was presented.

The committee then turned its attention to the public hearing on [HB 1180](#), sponsored by Representative Philip Oehlerking (R-Ballwin). The bill requires students to complete at least one half unit credit of personal finance in order to graduate high school. Additionally, the bill codifies current DESE guidelines which requires curriculum be updated every seven years and whom shall be allowed to serve on the board recommending the changing curriculum. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Securities Commissioner Michael O'Donnell who stated financial literacy is the foundation of lifelong success. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Bankers Association, Missouri Consumer Credit Coalition, Mortgage Bankers Association of Missouri and the Missouri Credit Union Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Hazing**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 234](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill creates the offense of hazing. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which aligned the language with SB 384, the Senate companion bill to ensure consistency. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Hemp-Derived Products**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 393](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O'Fallon). The bill seeks to establish a regulatory framework for hemp-derived consumable products. The bill imparts a 2% excise tax on retail sales of the products which will be directed to fund veterans' programs, drug abuse prevention and education programs and first responder programs. The bill creates the "Hemp Business Fund" and all fees collected relating to the licensure of manufacturers, distributor, and retailers will be deposited into the fund. Additionally, the bill restricts the sale or distribution of the products to persons under 21 and all products must be in a restricted area. Finally, the bill requires testing of the products by independent testing laboratories, imposes strict labeling requirements and imposes hemp-based consumable product related offenses. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which aligns the bill with the current three-tier system governing alcohol distribution, adds provisions for THCA marijuana products, raises the excise tax to 6%, clarifies manufacturers will bear the cost for testing, requires all retailers to pay a licensing fee up to ten locations, adds a definition for manufacturer and increases penalty fines from \$250 to \$1000.

Additionally, the substitute added protections for intellectual property rights. Once modified, the committee FAILED to pass the bill by a 5-7 vote.

### **Highway Contracts**

The House Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 1369](#), sponsored by Representative Josh Hurlbert (R-Smithville). The bill requires general specification documents created by MoDOT to be subject to the formal rulemaking process contained in Chapter 536 to ensure public notice, comment and legislative oversight. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

### **Hospital District Investments**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 244](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill modifies the investment authority of boards of trustees of municipal hospitals in third class cities and hospital district hospitals by increasing their authority to invest up to 25% of funds not required for operations of the hospital or other obligations, to 50%. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

The House Committee on General Laws convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 271](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Kalberloh (R-Lowry City). Currently, the board of trustees of any hospital may invest up to 15% of their funds, that are not required to meet their obligations or for the hospital operations, into any mutual funds in the form of an investment company, a variety of stocks, bonds, and money-market investments. This would add hospital districts to the current statutes. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was offered which would have added HB 781 regarding transparency in pricing regarding 340B drugs. After a lengthy discussion, the substitute was ultimately defeated. The original bill was passed by the committee by a 9-1-1 vote.

### **Hospital Price Transparency**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 336](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove). The bill specifies if a hospital is not in material compliance with federal hospital price transparency laws when a patient utilizes services or makes purchases, that hospital shall not be permitted to pursue collections for debts owed for that service or purchase. Supporting testimony was presented by Americas Health Insurance Plans who stated transparency is good for all consumers so informed decisions may be made regarding health care. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Insurance Coalition. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Hospital Association who stated hospitals are doing their best to comply with an ever-changing regulatory landscape regarding transparency and have concerns with the definition of “material compliance.” Additional opposing testimony was provided by SSM Health, Hannibal Regional Medical Center, St. Luke’s Health System and University of Missouri Health Care.

### **Hospital Services Sales Tax**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 492](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill authorizes Bates County to impose a sales tax not to exceed 1% for the purpose of supporting the operations of hospital services in that county. Supporting testimony was presented by Bates County Memorial Hospital who stated this tax is critical to continue to provide services in the county. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Hospitals – County**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1104](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill specifies who is prohibited to be elected or appointed to the board of trustees for a hospital and how a member may be removed from the board. Additionally, the bill changes the schedule of meetings from at least once a month to quarterly. Finally, the bill specifies what records, data and information are not subject to sunshine laws. Supporting testimony was presented by Phelps Health who stated county hospitals have operated under a differing set of statutes than other hospitals for 80 years and the way hospitals operate have changed drastically. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Golden Valley Memorial Healthcare. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate.

### **Hospitals – Specialty**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 845](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). The bill exempts “specialty hospitals” from certain provisions of law regarding victims of sexual offenses only if a transfer policy to hospitals with emergency departments is in place. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 12-0 vote.

### **Insurance Company Data Security**

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened on Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 385](#), sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). This is the Senate companion bill to [HB 436](#) and establishes the Insurance Data Security Act to keep policy holder data secure. The bill requires licensees to implement an information security program in keeping with the size and complexity of the licensee and the scope of its activities, specifying standards for risk assessment by licensees. Additionally, the bill further requires certain oversight of “third-party service providers” and requires incident response plans as part of information security programs, and contains annual reporting and document maintenance provisions. Finally, the bill also specifies procedures and standards for investigation of cybersecurity events, as well as requirements to notify regulators, consumers, other insurers, and insurance producers as detailed in the bill if certain cybersecurity events occur. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

### **Internet Harmful Material**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 483](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O’Fallon). This is the Senate companion bill to [HB 236](#) and requires commercial websites with more than 33 1/3% of material that is deemed harmful to children, to verify that those accessing the site are 18 years of age or older. Additionally, the bill imposes a civil penalty for damages if a minor is harmed. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

### **Judicial Proceedings Omnibus**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate [HB 615](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Coleman (R-Grain Valley). The bill modifies provisions regarding the admissibility of statements made by children under the age of 14 by raising the age to 18. Additionally, the bill modifies the offense of enticement of a child by increasing the age of the victim from less than 15 to less than 17. Finally, the bill enhances the penalties for the offense of prostitution and requires restitution for certain sexual offenses be paid to the Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation Fund. During bill

progression, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added provisions regarding court reporters. During Perfection, the sponsor successfully amended the bill by removing the provisions regarding court reporters. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday morning and, with no further debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 148-2 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Judicial Security**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1457](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O'Fallon). The bill modifies language from the Judicial Privacy Act to include circuit clerks, division clerks and municipal clerks. Additionally, the bill changes the definition of written request. Finally, the bill amends the offense of tampering with a judicial officer or the offense of tampering with judicial proceedings to prohibit a person convicted of the offense from being eligible for parole, probation or conditional release. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which changed judicial to court related throughout the bill. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 12-0 vote.

### **LAGERS**

The Senate Local Government, Elections, and Pensions Committee met Monday afternoon to discuss [SB 514](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). The bill is the Senate companion to [HB 976](#), sponsored by Representative Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater) and provides statutory updates to the Local Government Employees' Retirement System to account for federal changes and outdated/obsolete provisions. The Local Government Employees Retirement System testified in support of the bill. No opposing testimony was presented.

### **Landowner Wildlife Rights**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit [HB 563](#), sponsored by Representative Mitch Boggs (R-LaRussell). The bill prohibits the Department of Conservation from requiring landowners to register their property before receiving any landowner hunting permit or to possess a permit to take wildlife on their property. Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Conservation to issue hunting permits to resident and nonresident landowners who own at least five acres of land. Finally, those who qualify for landowner hunting permits may request a two-day permit for nonresident family members and they must be provided free of charge. After a brief debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by a 107-41 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Law Enforcement Sales Tax**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 547](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hudson (R-Cape Fair). The bill clarifies that all sales tax elections for law enforcement purposes conducted in Ozark County during the November 8, 2022, general election shall be deemed in compliance with state law if the aggregate sales tax rate is not in excess of 1.5%. Additionally, current law authorizes certain counties to levy a sales tax for the purpose of providing law enforcement services to such county, with the rate not to exceed 0.5%. This act authorizes such levy not to exceed 1%. Supporting testimony was presented by the Ozark County Sheriff who stated this would allow a tax, which has already received voter approval, to be implemented to

continue to support law enforcement in Ozark County. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Legal Aid Fund**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 355](#) and [SB 391](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe) and Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). These bills remove the expiration date of December 31, 2025, for the provision of law establishing the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund, which provides funding for legal services to eligible low-income persons. Supporting testimony was provided by Legal Aid of Western Missouri, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Legal Services of Southern Missouri, Mid-Missouri Legal Services, and the Missouri Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, who highlighted that these programs closed over 17,000 cases in 2024, assisting individuals with civil litigation services. A private citizen shared her personal experience, where Missouri Legal Services helped her retain disability services after a wrongful termination of her benefits. Supporters also emphasized the importance of these bills for survivors of domestic and sexual violence who rely on legal services for support. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Legal Tender**

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 194](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville). The bill creates and modifies provisions relating to gold and silver, and also prohibit the state treasurer from accepting payments using central bank digital currency. The sponsor informed the committee a Senate Committee Substitute will be forthcoming which will remove the provision requiring the State Treasurer to keep in the custody of the state treasury an amount of gold and silver greater than or equal to 1% of all state funds. Supporting testimony was provided by ArmorVine and Liberty Link. Opposing testimony was presented by Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated the language would place a mandate on private businesses.

The committee then turned its attention to a public hearing on [SB 25](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove). This is the Senate companion bill to [HB 433](#) and exempts from state income tax the portion of capital gain on the sale or exchange of gold and silver specie that are otherwise included in the taxpayer's federal adjusted gross income. Additionally, the bill creates the "Constitutional Money Act" and declares that specie legal tender and electronic currency shall be accepted as payment for all public debts and may be received as payment for all private debts contracted for in the state of Missouri, at the discretion of the receiving entity. Supporting testimony was presented by Missouri First. Additional supporting testimony was provided by ArmorVine and Liberty Link. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **License Reciprocity**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 283](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). Current law requires an oversight body for professional licenses to waive any examination, educational, or experience requirements within 30 days for a resident military spouse or a nonresident military spouse and issue the applicant a license if the applicant meets all other requirements. The bill seeks a waiver for resident spouses of Missouri law enforcement officers. Supporting testimony was presented by the Division of Professional Registration. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of

Commerce and Industry and United We. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate who stated license reciprocity waivers should be available to all professions.

### **Liquor Licenses (FIFA)**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1265](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill allows any establishment licensed to sell liquor by the drink to sell, serve and allow for the consumption of alcohol between 6am and 5am the following day for the duration of the 2026 FIFA World Cup Tournament. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated this is not mandatory for any business and allows any municipality to opt out. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the City of Kansas City and the Missouri Restaurant Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee. On Wednesday afternoon, the committee revisited the bill in executive session. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Long-Term Care Facilities**

The House Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 815](#) sponsored by Representative Dean Van Schoiack (R-Savannah). This bill prohibits any rule or regulation requiring a prospective employee of an assisted living or residential care facility be assessed by a physician before becoming employed by the facility. It also provides that the Department of Health and Senior Services does not need to make public or post a notice of noncompliance if the noncompliance matter was corrected within 24 hours of being given notice and no resident was physically harmed before the noncompliance matter was corrected. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clarifies without a signature there is no implied contract with a referral agency. Additionally, the substitute allows facilities to correct any violations within 12 to 24 hours if a third-party is required to remedy any violation where a resident experienced no physical harm. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 9-4-1 vote.

### **MDHEWD**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 128](#), sponsored by Senator Barbara Washington (D-Kansas City). Several years ago, the Department of Workforce Development was moved to the Department of Higher Education. The bill seeks to update statutory references to reflect that change and seeks to grant authority to the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development to authorize grants to certain eligible entities. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Military Personnel Tuition**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 419](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill clarifies that certain military service personnel, their spouses, and their unemancipated children under 24, Missouri National Guard members, and any individuals serving in the reserves, be considered Missouri residents for the purposes of any undergraduate or graduate degree program in Missouri institutions of higher education. After little debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 153-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Missouri Ethics Commission**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 374](#), sponsored by Representative Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton). Currently, governing bodies of political subdivisions with general operating budgets in excess of \$1 million are required to file financial interest statements with the Missouri Ethics Commission. The bill alters this by requiring governing bodies to submit an attestation to the Commission if the operating budget is expected to exceed \$1 million. Additionally, the bill requires election authorities and other entities to submit to the commission a list of those required to submit financial interest statements within two days of the closure of candidate filing. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Municipal League who stated this would simplify reporting requirements for cities. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Municipal League of Metro St. Louis who stated this would lessen the chances of mistakenly missing required deadlines. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri Ethics Commission who stated this simply codifies the existing process and clarifies what is expected of political subdivisions.

### **Missouri Works Program**

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 1168](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Knight (R-Lebanon). The bill extends the sunset on the Deal Closing Fund Program within the Missouri Works Program from 2025 to 2031. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Missouri-Kansas Border War**

The House Committee on Commerce convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1350](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Sharp (R-Kansas City). Current law establishes restrictions on economic incentives for jobs relocating from a “Kansas border county” to a “Missouri border county.” The bill extends the deadline on these restrictions from 2025 to 2035. Supporting testimony was presented by the Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce and the Civic Council of Greater Kansas City who stated this was a priority in 2019 after hundreds of thousands of dollars were wasted in each state in incentives but this does not prevent either state from competing for new business. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Motor Vehicle Inspections**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 799](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill modifies when motor vehicles require inspections. During Perfection, several amendments were added which changed the title to Motor Vehicles, establishes a Space Force license plate, allows retired law enforcement officers to have confidential license plates and allows the fee for the Conservation Federation license plate to be paid directly rather than through a third-party vendor. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday, and with limited further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 110-33 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Motor Vehicle Tracking**

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 971](#), sponsored by Representative Cecelie Williams (R-Dittmer). The bills are similar and establish an offense of unlawful tracking of

vehicle without the owner's consent. After brief debate, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes. The House dedicated floor time Thursday morning to revisit HB 971. After no further debate, the House passed the bill by a 151-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **MSHSAA Appeals**

The House Special Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1361](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Meirath (R-Excelsior Springs). The bill creates a "Transfer Board" to handle any and all appeals resulting from decisions made by statewide activities association that facilitates interscholastic activities for secondary school students who attend a public school. Additionally, the bill sets a timeframe to hear the appeal and render a decision. Supporting testimony was presented by the family of Rue Wells who stated this would ensure no other families endure arbitrary decisions made by faceless organizations. Additional supporting testimony was provided by coaches and private citizens. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate who stated the removal of the State Board of Education makes the issue a political one.

### **Newspaper Modifications**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss [HB 353](#), sponsored by Representative Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton). Currently, in order to qualify as a newspaper legally acceptable to run public notices and advertisements, a newspaper must have been published regularly for a period of three years; or must be the successor newspaper to a defunct newspaper and begin publication no later than 30 days after the termination of the prior newspaper. The bill reduces the time period of regular publication from three years to one year and increases the time period from 30 days to 90 days within which a successor newspaper must begin publication. The bill also allows a newspaper that has been purchased or newly established by another newspaper that satisfies these conditions to qualify. The Missouri Press Association testified in support of the bill. No opposing testimony was presented.

### **Nonresident Pupils**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate [HB 711](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Pollitt (R-Sedalia). The bill allows nonresident pupils to enroll in public schools in the state with certain conditions and outlines the procedures and policies necessary to allow students to transfer between nonresident school districts. Specifically, the legislation would allow students to leave their resident school district to enroll in adjoining districts that opt into the open enrollment program, for a total of up to 3% of the district's student population in the previous year. Transportation would be parents' responsibility, unless the child qualifies for free or reduced lunch or has transportation under an individualized education plan. The bill also establishes the "Parent Public School Choice Fund" to compensate districts for the costs associated with transporting students with specialized needs or who qualify for free and reduced lunch, subject to appropriation. Additionally, the bill prohibits a transferring nonresident student from participating in varsity athletics for at least 365 days and allows any student to participate in open enrollment as long as the transfer does not cause the district to conflict with a provision of an enforceable desegregation court ordered or a court approved desegregation plan. Finally, the bill requires students in a K-8 district wishing to transfer out of the district to do so before their sixth grade year and outlines the process for transportation reimbursement in the event the General Assembly fails to appropriate sufficient funds to the public school choice fund. During bill progression, a House

Committee Substitute was adopted which modified several provisions within the bill. Specifically, the substitute:

- Modified the definition of transfer student to include family-based education and non-public school kids and they will count for the 3% cap for the districts;
- Alters the timelines to one month earlier;
- Prohibits school districts from including in their model policy they will not take special education students but does allow for school districts to modify IEPs based on the resources available and allows the parent to decide to return to their original district or not;
- Modifies the timelines for acceptance or rejection of applications for school districts;
- Adds exemptions to the one year attendance requirement;
- Allows for districts to remove a child from open enrollment if their attendance rate falls below 80%; and,
- Limits transportation to 30 miles.

Representative Greg Sharpe (R-Ewing) successfully amended the bill by requiring students who use the open enrollment portal to stay in the new district for two years rather than one. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Wednesday afternoon. After lengthy additional debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by an 88-69 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Opioid Alternatives**

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 158](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Desloge). This legislation bars health benefit plans from denying coverage for non-opioid drugs in favor of opioids for patients with a higher risk for opioid abuse. Additionally, health benefit plans cannot require patients to try an opioid drug before covering the non-opioid prescription drug or require a higher level of cost-sharing for a non-opioid prescription drug than for an opioid drug. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Optometrists**

The House Committee on Professional Registration convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 929](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). Currently, optometrists are prohibited from performing surgeries, including the use of lasers for treatment of any disease or condition or for correction of refractive error. This bill allows optometrists to perform certain surgical procedures for correction and relief of ocular abnormalities. Additionally, the bill allows the use of injectable agents, except as otherwise specified and limited by the Board of Optometry. The sponsor stated the intent of the legislation is to ensure current statutes and regulations are not getting in the way of a health care provider providing services to patients in the practice in which they are trained. Committee members expressed frustration regarding “turf wars” and repeatedly asked for compromise language to be submitted. Supporting testimony was provided by an optometrist from Warrensburg who stated this bill would allow optometrists to perform in-office surgical procedures they are educated and trained to do. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Optometric Student Association, private citizens and several optometrists. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri State Medical Association who stated the current scope of practice for optometrists is adequate and the current legislation in no way addresses what procedures they want to perform nor addresses the differences in training. Additional opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Jefferson City Medical Group, Missouri Dermatological Society, Missouri

Society of Anesthesiologists, Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Missouri Society of Orthopedic Physicians and Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

### **Paint Recycling Program**

The House Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1216](#), sponsored by Representative David Dolan (R-Sikeston). This legislation authorizes the producers of architectural paint sold a retail to either establish or join with a nonprofit organization to create a plan for a post-consumer paint recycling program. The plan will be submitted to the Department of Natural Resources for approval and must be structured to reduce the generation, promote the reuse and recycling, and manage the waste stream of post-consumer paint. Supporting testimony was presented by The American Coatings Association presented testimony in favor of [HB 1216](#) noting that ten states, including Washington DC, have passed similar legislation. Two states, Illinois and Maryland will have their programs up and running very soon. They said the bill is no cost to the state and simply seeks to provide a place for people to take their unused or leftover paint so that it can be properly recycled, repurposed, and reused. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Municipal League who said that they believe there are some cities who do paint “take back” days, but this could provide an avenue for ensuring more paint is being properly recycled. Informational testimony was presented by MARC Solid Waste Management District.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 239](#), sponsored by Senator Jamie Burger (R-Benton). This is the Senate companion to [HB 1216](#), highlighted above. Committee discussion and testimony mirrored that of the House hearing.

### **Peer-to-Peer Car Sharing Programs**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate [HB 974](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Murphy (R-St. Louis). The bill seeks to address the car leasing components by articulating the liability of a shared vehicle and does not include the Uber provisions. During bill progression, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which included [HB 57](#), [HB 1032](#) and [HB 1141](#), to the title, as the bills are similar, to create one legislative vehicle. Additionally, the substitute adds compromise language to ensure the provisions contained within the bill do not conflict with existing statute and includes underinsured motorists. Finally, the bill specifies insurance coverage begins from the time the app is activated up to 30 minutes upon delivery or completion. During debate, the sponsor successfully amended the bill to remove the entire section regarding insurance for delivery vehicles and clarified the “uninsured motorist” definition. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. The bill was revisited Thursday and, with no further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 150-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs)**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss [HB 982](#), sponsored by Representative John Hewkin (R-Cuba) and [HB 840](#), sponsored by Representative Bennie Cook (R-Houston). The bills are similar and address payments for prescription drugs. The bills specify that certain provisions of law pertaining to pharmacists and pharmacies shall not be construed to prohibit patients' ability to obtain prescription services from any licensed pharmacist or pharmacy. Additionally, the bills make it unlawful for any PBM to charge a health benefit plan or payer a different amount for a

drug's ingredient cost or dispensing fee than the amount reimbursed to the pharmacy by a PBM, if the PBM retains any amount of the difference. Finally, the bills repeal a portion of a definition to clarify that certain provisions relating to the maximum allowable cost of a prescription are applicable to all pharmacies, rather than only to contracted pharmacies. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which removed all provisions regarding any willing provider information and all provisions regarding spread pricing. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0-2 vote.

### **Pornographic Materials**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 276](#), sponsored by Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). Currently, public schools and public libraries are required to take certain actions to prevent minors from accessing pornographic materials on a public access computer. This act adds charter schools and digital library catalogs. Additionally, the bill defines "digital library catalog" and requires a full listing of required books to be posted on the school district and charter school websites. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which clarifies the school districts are responsible to ensure compliance, complaints may only be made by taxpayers residing in the school district and adds penalty provisions. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1-1 vote.

### **Postconviction Relief**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1169](#), sponsored by Representative Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater). The bill seeks to modify provisions regarding postconviction relief when the death penalty is applied. Specifically, the bill seeks to expedite cases and the review process for death penalty cases. The sponsor stated currently the national average for postconviction relief of death penalty cases is 19 years. Supporting testimony was presented by the Public Protection Section of the Attorney General's Office who stated the legislation would offer victims a timelier version of justice. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a murder victim's family. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Pregnant Women Testing**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 803](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). Currently, pregnant women are asked to take a blood test at the time of the first prenatal examination, or no later than 20 days after the first prenatal examination, to screen for syphilis and hepatitis B, as well as any other treatable diseases and metabolic disorders as are prescribed by the Department of Health and Senior Services. Additionally, with the woman's consent, an additional blood sample may be taken at 28 days of pregnancy to screen for hepatitis C and HIV. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Presentence Investigations**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 1399](#), sponsored by Representative Doyle Justus (R-Troy). Currently, as part of a presentence investigation, a probation officer must inquire of the victim of an offense about the facts of the offense and any personal injury or financial loss incurred by the victim when a jury enters a finding of guilt and assesses punishment. This bill adds the same requirement when a judge enters a finding of guilt and assesses punishment. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

### **Prior Authorization**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 618](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). The bill allows health providers that have achieved 90% prior authorization approval for healthcare services during a 6 month evaluation period, to not be required to submit prior authorization for the 6 months following that evaluation period. During debate, the sponsor successfully amended the bill to include compromise language. Specifically, the bill now contains a delayed effective date of implementation; allows hospitals to participate with a value based agreement in place; excludes critical access hospitals; expands to ensure denials by insurers aren't penalized if it is for a service not offered; allows health carriers to perform internal auditing; requires similarly credentialed professional to review prior authorizations; and, when switching plans allows for a 90-day grace period for consumers. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 148-4 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 230](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-St. Louis). The bill allows health providers that have achieved 90% prior authorization approval for healthcare services during a six-month evaluation period, to receive gold card status which means they would not be required to submit prior authorization requests for the six months following that evaluation period. The sponsor stated the intent of the legislation is to help provide timely healthcare and remove the barriers and burdens prior authorization has created for both patients and providers. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Private Property Owners**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 595](#), sponsored by Representative Chris Brown (R-Kansas City). The bill seeks to prohibit local governments from requiring owners to accept Section 8 vouchers. Additionally, the bill also prohibits a local government from enacting an ordinance that will prohibit landlords from using income-qualifying methods and criminal records from determining whether to rent or lease a property or limits the amount of security deposit required from a tenant. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **Professional Licensing**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 834](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Farnan (R-Stanberry). The bill modifies the process for obtaining a license to practice embalming and to practice funeral directing. Specifically, the bill repeals the current requirements to become a licensed embalmer and to practice funeral directing and replaces them with new requirements. During Perfection, several amendments were added which changed the title to Professional Registration. Additionally, the bill now contains provisions from [HB 58](#) regarding emergency suspensions or restrictions for massage therapists and chiropractors. Finally, the bill now contains [HB 268](#) which modifies provisions regarding the Master's of Social Work degree program. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and, with no further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 133-17 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Property Development Permits**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for discuss passage of [HB 1264](#), sponsored by Representative David Casteel (R-High Ridge). The bill seeks to provide a fast-track process for building permit applications. Specifically, the bill requires political subdivisions must approve or deny permit applications within 30 calendar days and if no response is given to the applicant, the permit is deemed approved. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which requires political subdivisions to notify applicants they have received the application. Additionally, the substitute requires political subdivisions who deny an application for being incomplete to allow the applicant to resubmit the application with requested information within 10 business days. Finally, applications that are re-submitted to a political subdivision may not subsequently be denied due to additional, unrelated reasons from the initial request. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 14-3 vote.

### **Property Tax Limits**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SJR 62](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). This constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters, provides enabling language to allow the General Assembly to cap or limit property taxes. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **Proposition A Modification**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 567](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). This legislation seeks to alter Proposition A which the voters approved by a statewide vote in November 2024. Specifically, the bill delays the effective date of earning paid accrued sick leave until January 1, 2026. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted which ensures the \$15 minimum wage goes into effect on January 1, 2026, removes the increase being tied to the CPI and removes the government exemption from the minimum wage provisions. Finally, the language also makes exemptions for essential service workers having to report reasons for needing sick leave. After more than two hours of debate, the House provided the first of two necessary votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited Thursday morning and, after a lengthy debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 96-51 vote. The Emergency Clause FAILED to be adopted by an 84-62 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Prosecuting Attorneys**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 495](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). This act requires prosecuting and circuit attorney offices to submit annual arrest and prosecution reports to the Attorney General, who will compile a statewide summary for the public, Governor, and legislative leaders. Supporting testimony was provided by Freedom Principle MO and FGA Action, who stated that the bill seeks to bring much-needed transparency to the prosecutorial process. They argued that prosecutors, who hold significant power over criminal cases, often make discretionary decisions behind closed doors without accountability or uniform standards. The witness highlighted the example of former St. Louis Circuit Attorney Kim Gardner, whose office lacked consistent decision-making practices, which impacted public trust. They believe that requiring prosecutors to report prosecution statistics would ensure greater transparency and help the public understand if they are being served fairly and justly. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **Public Defenders**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 340](#), sponsored by Senator Steven Roberts (D-St. Louis). This act removes a judge's ability to place cases on a waiting list for public defender services due to caseload concerns. Supporting testimony was provided by the American Civil Liberties Union, who stated that the bill eliminates the public defender waitlist, which has denied thousands of defendants their constitutional right to legal counsel. They argued that the waitlist leads to prolonged pretrial detention, job and housing loss, and weakened legal defenses. In 2020, over 4,600 people were on the waitlist, with more than 600 in jail for months or years without representation. The bill ensures timely legal counsel, upholds constitutional rights, and promotes judicial efficiency. Although no opposing testimony was provided, the Missouri State Public Defender's office testified for informational purposes only.

## **Public Safety Omnibus/STL PD**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to revisit [HB 495](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis). The bill as filed returns the control of the City of St. Louis Police Department back to the Board of Police Commissioners and prohibits the mayor or any city officer from impeding or hindering the board. Additionally, the bill sets forth penalty provisions for stunt driving, endangering the welfare of a child in the first degree, rioting and resisting arrest, and creates the Committee on School Safety. During the bill's progression in the House, the bill was expanded to include:

- If a person is removed from office or resigns during a quo warranto process, the same office may not be sought in the future;
- Increases the penalties for child trafficking in Missouri;
- Removes the sunset on crime victim notifications;
- HB 645, modifies provisions relating to ignition interlock device requirements for certain intoxication-related offenses;
- Creates the offense of organized retail theft;
- Requires the collection of the immigration status of all criminal offenders;
- A prohibition on injection sites;
- Creates the offense of filing a non-consensual common-law lien;
- Creates the offense of obstructing government operations;
- Creates the offense of tampering with a water supply;
- Modifies the juvenile offender point system;
- Modifies the makeup of the Board of Police Commissioners; and,
- Adopted language to ensure the language mirrors the Senate companion [SB 52](#).

During the bill's progression in the Senate the bill again expanded to include:

- Requires police officers, sheriffs, and the chief law enforcement official of the City of St. Louis to submit referrals for any traffic violation, ordinance violation, or criminal offense to the prosecuting or circuit attorney and require the MO Office of Prosecution Services to produce a statewide report based on data submitted by each individual prosecuting or circuit attorney office;
- Allows a chief law enforcement agency to request assistance from a law enforcement agency of another United States jurisdiction outside of the state;

- Currently, the city of Springfield may enact ordinances that authorize forfeiture of a motor vehicle operated by a person who has had his or her driver's license suspended or revoked for certain criminal offenses. This act adds offenses involving two or more violations of stunt driving or street takeover committed on separate occasions where in each violation the person was operating a vehicle, and another person was injured or killed as well as the offense of aggravated fleeing a stop or detention of a motor vehicle;
- Provides a correctional center shall charge no more than 12 cents per minute for a domestic phone call of an inmate;
- Prohibits jails from using restraints on a pregnant offender in her third trimester, including during transportation, delivery, and 48-hours post-delivery;
- Removes the sunset on electronic monitoring of persons in violation of protection orders;
- Creates the offense of bus hijacking;
- Modifies the offense of Criminal Activity Forfeiture Act to include “criminal activity” to the definition;
- Creates the “Missing and Murdered African Women and Girls Task Force;”
- Repeals the Missouri Incarceration Reimbursement Act;
- Provides that any individual who was later determined to be innocent as a result of an evidentiary hearing and finding in a habeas corpus proceeding or a proceeding held pursuant to the prosecution's motion to vacate or set aside a judgment may be paid restitution; and
- Creates the offense of resisting arrest.

After nearly 11-hours of debate, the sponsor further amended the bill by offering compromise language regarding the control of the City of St. Louis Police Department. Specifically, instead of putting control back to the Board of Police Commissioners, a new board is created which will govern the St. Louis Police force. The board will consist of six members including the mayor while the remaining five will be appointed by the governor, one of which will be a non-voting citizen, and all are subject to Senate confirmation. Additional changes were made to the reporting status of the immigration status for certain persons arrested for offenses required to be reported; changed a couple words on private police to private security; modified the percentages of minimum funding for the police in the St. Louis Metropolitan Police District, by making it 22% with increases yearly until they reach a ceiling of that 25%; and removed the offense of rioting. After a brief debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by a 27-5 vote and the Emergency Clause was adopted by a 25-7 vote. The bill was sent back to the House for their consideration. On Wednesday morning, the House revisited the bill and, after nearly two hours of debate, Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed the bill by a 113-39-7 vote and adopted the Emergency Clause. The bill now will be sent to the Governor for his signature or veto.

### **Public Safety Recruitment**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [SB 71](#), sponsored by Senator David Gregory (R-Ballwin). The bill creates the "First Responder Recruitment and Retention Act" to provide free college tuition at public colleges and universities in the state for police officers, firefighters, paramedics, other emergency response professionals, and their dependents. Under the bill, any eligible first responder, emergency response professional, or their dependent may qualify for a waiver of the full cost of tuition at any in-state community college, 4 year college, or university for up to 5 years or 120 credit hours so long as they have not previously completed a bachelor's degree and maintain residency in the state for 5 years following the completion of their program of study. During bill progression, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which changes the funding mechanisms by providing waivers

only in the event funding is available and appropriated, instead of requiring schools to cover the costs. During debate, the sponsor successfully offered a Senate Substitute which requires veterans to pursue veteran's benefits first and clarifies the tuition waiver is applicable for five years or until 120 credit hours are achieved. Senator Stephen Webber (D-Columbia) successfully amended the bill to update the definition of telecommunicator. The sponsor further amended by the bill by clarifying the college or university must be located in Missouri and further clarifies donations may be made into the fund. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited Thursday morning and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 33-1 vote. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

### **Railroad Crossings**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 254](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Bean (R-Peach Orchard). The bill specifies that drives a required to stop at railroad crossings for "any on-track equipment" in addition to trains. Supporting testimony was presented by BMWED-Teamsters Rail Division who stated this would protect both train engineers and motorists. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Associated Industries of Missouri. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys who stated this would be difficult for motorists in rural areas where railroad crossings are not clearly or sometimes properly marked. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri Railroad Association.

### **Real Estate Service Agreements**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 478](#), sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). The bill seeks to provide clarity for service agreements between realtors and tenants or buyers. Specifically, the bill requires a designated real estate broker acting as a single agent for a buyer or tenant shall enter into a written agency agreement before, rather than either before or while, engaging in brokerage acts. Supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Realtors Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Real Estate Transactions**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1257](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Owen (R-Springfield). The bill modifies the definition of "certified funds" which is used to regulate the use of certain funds by real estate settlement agents and title insurance agents. Supporting testimony was provided by Missouri Land Title Association and the St. Louis Home Builders Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee. On Wednesday afternoon, the committee revisited the bill in executive session. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 8-0-2 vote.

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 488](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill modifies the definition of "certified funds" for the use in regulating certain funds used by real estate settlement and title insurance agents. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Recovery High Schools**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1386](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). The bill expands the definition of

"sponsoring entity" for recovery high schools to include the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, magnet schools, charter schools, and public and private schools. Supporting testimony was presented by a graduate from a recovery high school who stated without the program he would no longer be alive and able to advocate for others. Additional supporting testimony was provided by educators from recovery high schools, past students, Missouri NEA, parents and supporters of recovery high schools. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate who stated this would create duplicative and costly services for those in recovery.

### **Regional Planning Commissions**

The House Committee on Correction and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 837](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Farnan (R-Stanberry). Under current law, state funds for the East-West Gateway Coordinating Council and for the Mid-America Regional Council are not to exceed \$65,000 and state funds for other regional planning commissions must not exceed \$25,000. This bill changes the sums to \$130,000 and \$50,000, respectively. Additionally, the bill removes the regional planning commissions of Show-Me, Missouri Valley, Ozark Gateway, ABCD, and Lakes County and adds Harry S. Truman, MO-Kan, Pioneer Trails, and Southwest Missouri. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by 9-1 vote.

### **Religious Freedom**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 75](#), sponsored by Representative Cathy Jo Loy (R-Carthage). The bill provides that no public official may issue an order that has the effect of limiting or prohibiting a religious group or place of worship from holding religious services or meetings. This prohibition does not apply to religious groups using places of worship to intentionally commit or plan acts of violence. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-2 vote.

### **Residency Requirements**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit [HB 73](#), sponsored by Representative Tim Taylor (R-Bunceton). The bill will change the requirement of being a resident of the city to be appointed to a non-elected local board or commission. After no further debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by a 154-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Revitalizing Downtowns**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate [SB 35](#), sponsored by Senator Stephen Roberts (R-St. Louis). This is the Senate companion to [HB 610](#) and establishes the "Revitalizing Missouri Downtowns and Main Streets Act." Specifically, the bill establishes a tax credit to provide an incentive for developers to convert abandoned buildings to living spaces, stores, etc. in downtown areas. During debate, the sponsor offered a Senate Substitute which modified the definition of a qualified converted building to allow such building to also have been utilized for office purposes by the owner-occupant and exempts certain large projects from having to apply to the Department for final approval of tax credits. Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville) amended the bill by successfully placing a sunset of 2033 on the provisions. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday morning and, with little further debate, Third Read and Passed by a 20-13 vote. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

### **Rural Workforce Housing**

The House Special Committee on Rural Issues convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 245](#), sponsored by Representative Greg Sharpe (R-Ewing). The bill establishes the "Rural Workforce Housing Investment Act," creating a workforce housing grant program in the Department of Economic Development (DED) to foster and support the development of workforce housing in rural communities. Grant maximums shall not exceed \$1 million to any one nonprofit development organization over a two-year period, with no more than \$2 million cumulative for any single grantee through FY 2028. Additionally, the bill contains guidelines for the awarding of grants and establishes the "Rural Workforce Housing Investment Fund". After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-1 vote.

### **Rx During Emergency**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 519](#), sponsored by Senator Jill Carter (R-Granby). The bill specifies in the event a pharmacist is unable to obtain a refill authorization from a prescriber due to death or incapacity, the pharmacist may use their professional judgement to fill a prescription as needed for an emergency period so long as the amount dispensed does not exceed 90 days. The bill excludes controlled substances. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Pharmacy Association and RX Outreach who stated the 90 day extension is an option and not a mandate. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Walgreens. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri State Medical Association who stated the language is too broad and leaves open to interpretation when a pharmacist is allowed to utilize their professional judgement.

### **Rx Rulemaking Authority**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 292](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill modifies provisions of rulemaking authority for pharmacy services within hospitals and attempts to streamline the process for licensure for physicians. Additionally, the bill modifies the definition of "hospital" for purposes of regulating the dispensation and distribution of controlled substances to include outpatient facilities owned and operated by a hospital. A hospital may obtain a separate registration for the distribution or dispensation of controlled substances from the Department of Health and Senior Services for each outpatient facility owned or operated by the hospital in which behavioral health or substance abuse services are delivered. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which makes regulatory changes to the distribution of controlled substances outpatient facilities owned and operated by a hospital. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 609](#), sponsored by Representative Terry Thompson (R-Lexington). The bill modifies the definition of "hospital" for purposes of dispensing controlled substances. The bill modifies provisions which prohibit providers from accepting unused portions of controlled substances unless prescribed. Additionally, the bill requires candidates applying for licensure as a physician to submit to a criminal background check and furnish educational and experience documents. Finally, the bill modifies rulemaking authority regarding pharmacy services in hospitals. The sponsor informed the committee a House Committee Substitute will be forthcoming which will remove the provisions regarding physician licensure and the provisions regarding unused portions of controlled substances. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Hospital Association who stated they are still working with the Board of

Healing Arts to finalize all language and hope this legislation would provide more clarity and efficiency. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri State Medical Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **School Background Checks**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 460](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill adds charter schools to current statute requiring background checks to be conducted on school personnel. Additionally, the bill requires companies with contracts with school districts to conduct the background checks and includes background checks on ride-share services. Supporting testimony was presented by HopSkipDrive who stated the legislation would allow them apply to the Highway Patrol to be a qualified entity in order to receive FBI fingerprint background check results and review them, as they do in ten other states. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **School Board Elections**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 485](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). Under current law, elections for school board members are held on either the general municipal election day or such day as is specified in the county charter, with terms of office ranging from three years to six years, depending on the district. The bill requires all such elections to be held at the November general election and makes all such terms four years. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **School Bus Endorsements**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to revisit [HB 296](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Kalberloh (R-Lowry City). The bill changes the age to 75 from 70 for the number of years the license may be renewed for school bus endorsements on a driver's license. During Perfection, Representative Danny Busick (R-Newtown) successfully amended the bill which allows endorsements to be renewed every two years rather than annually. After minimum further debate, the House Third Read and Passed the bill by a 113-20 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **School Civil Liability**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 1197](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). This bill defines "multiple-occupancy restroom or changing area" and limits civil liability for private schools that establish such restrooms and changing areas for the exclusive use of males or females. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clarifies a parent may accompany a child with the school's permission if under the age of 8 years. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

### **School Reading System**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 556](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Bonne Terre). The bill prohibits school districts from using a three-cueing system to teach students to read. The act defines a "three-cueing system" as any model of teaching students to read based on meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues, also known as "MSV." Supporting testimony was presented by Aligned who stated this legislation is a significant step forward in the right direction for all public school students to have the foundational skills for reading.

Additional supporting testimony was provided by Accel Net in Action. Opposing testimony was presented by the Ozark School District who stated the legislation removes instructional options away from teachers. Additionally, districts need teachers to monitor and adjust instruction to each individual child based on what they know about the student's use of meaning, structure, and syntax within the five pillars of reading, phonological awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri NEA who stated they are currently implementing the literacy provisions passed in SB 681 and making changes at this time are premature as the Council has not yet even had a chance to meet until this week. Additional supporting testimony was presented by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **School Training Requirements**

The House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 332](#), sponsored by Representative Ann Kelley (R-Lamar). The bill modifies the number of DESE-required training hours teachers and certain staff must complete each school year to instead require annual training for the first three years of employment and then allow individual school districts to decide how frequently to require training as appropriate for their individual district thereafter. Additionally, the bill adds active shooter response training to the mandated schedule of training. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute which changed shall to may regarding school intruder training. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 17-0 vote.

### **School Transportation**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to revisit [HB 538](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). The bill expands existing required background checks for school district transportation employees, including drivers of school district vehicles and those contracted to transport students, to include charter schools in the state and specifies that any contracted transportation company is responsible for conducting the background check. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted which increases the maximum age for a two year license for drivers from 69 to 75, waives the licensing fee for any bus driver over the age of 75 and creates a biennial licensure renewal for commercial bus driving licenses for drivers above the age of 75. There was little further debate before the House Third Read and Passed the bill by a 107-19 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Sexual Offenses (Child)**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HJR 26](#), sponsored by Representative Wendy Hausman (R-St. Peters). Upon voter approval, this resolution provides that the penalty for sexual trafficking of a child in the first degree is life imprisonment without eligibility for probation or parole. The resolution also specifies that life imprisonment means for the duration of the person's natural life. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

### **Sheriff's Retirement System**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 141](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Sullivan). This is the Senate companion to [HB 558](#) and seeks to find a fix to the Sheriff's Retirement System after an adverse lawsuit decreased the system by \$110 million. Currently, the state has invested \$2.5 million to hold the system constant so it does not fall into arrears but a statutory change is necessary to stabilize the system. The sponsor stated some of the options include raising the fee for the Sheriff's Deputy Fund and

allowing a sweep of that fund every 2 years. Additionally, Sheriffs could donate 5% of their salary and have the counties donate 2% of general revenue to the fund. Finally, another option could be utilizing \$2 of the prisoner per diem paid to the counties by the state. Committee members expressed concerns utilizing the prisoner per diem fund would create a hardship if the per diem rate was ever lowered again. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Sheriff's Retirement System who stated they have been attempting to create a three-legged approach to ensure fund solvency and not be dependent on a single source of income. Additionally, if a solution is not found, the fund will be bankrupt in nine years. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Boone County Sheriff, Missouri Sheriffs United, Missouri Sheriff's Association and retired sheriffs who stated finding funding is critical for not just current sheriffs but also those who have already retired. Informational testimony was presented by the County Commissioners Association of Missouri who stated they want to support the sheriffs but all stakeholders need to be a part of any ongoing discussions to find a solution. Additionally, all counties have differing budgets and ongoing funding needs that need to be considered when addressing sheriff funding. Additional informational testimony was provided by the Saline County Commission and Callaway County Commission. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House Committee on Pensions convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 558](#), sponsored by Representative Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater). This is the House companion to [SB 141](#), highlighted above. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which removed the provision requiring the counties to pay 2% into the system. Additionally, the substitute clarifies 50% of the remaining funds in the Deputy Sheriff Supplemental fund would be utilized to subsidize the Sheriff Retirement Fund. The sponsor informed the committee additional changes would need to be made moving forward. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Solar Pilot Program**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday afternoon to discuss [HB 662](#), also sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Wildwood). This bill establishes a community solar pilot program requiring each retail electric supplier to implement a three-year community solar pilot program during calendar years 2026-2028. MO NAACP, Great Rivers Environmental Law Center, MOSEA, Sunset Solar, American Power Policy, ReNew MO, and the MO Coalition for the Environment supported the bill. Ameren MO, Liberty Utilities, and Evergy opposed the bill.

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy, and the Environment met Tuesday morning to discuss [SB 386](#), sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). The bill is the Senate companion to [HB 662](#), highlighted above. Committee discussion and testimony mirrored the House hearing.

### **Speech Pathologists Licensure**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 431](#), sponsored by Senator Tracy McCreery (D-Olivette). The bill modifies the requirements for licensure as a speech pathologist or audiologist by providing for completion of a clinical fellowship under the direct supervision of a licensed speech-language pathologist in good standing, rather than under the direct supervision of a person licensed by the state of Missouri in the profession in which the applicant seeks to be licensed. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

## **Spousal Maintenance**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 562](#), sponsored by Senator David Gregory (R-St. Louis). This act revises spousal and child support laws, defining three types of spousal maintenance—bridge, rehabilitative, and durational—based on marriage length and financial need. It sets time limits for maintenance orders, prioritizes self-sufficiency, and allows modifications under specific conditions. Existing maintenance orders may be reclassified, and the standard for modifying support orders is updated to require "substantial and continuing changed circumstances."

Supporting testimony was provided by private attorneys, who stated that the bill provides a more predictable and structured approach to awarding maintenance in family law cases. They argued that the current system is confusing and inconsistent, and the bill creates guidelines based on the marriage's duration and financial reliance. It promotes self-sufficiency, reduces unnecessary litigation, and offers judges clearer standards for maintenance awards, making the process more stable and predictable. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **St. Louis Sheriff**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 529](#), sponsored by Representative Steve Butz (D-St. Louis). Currently, sheriffs other than the sheriffs of the City of St. Louis and of St. Louis County are required to hold a valid peace officer license to be eligible to hold the office of sheriff. To align St. Louis County with the rest of the State, the bill repeals the provision excluding the sheriff of the City of St. Louis and requires him or her to have a valid peace officer license to qualify to be sheriff. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **State Departments (DEI)**

The Senate Committee on Government Efficiency convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 742](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill seeks to prohibit funds from any State department from being used for intradepartmental programs, staffing, or initiatives related to "diversity, equity, and inclusion" or similar initiatives that promote preferential treatment based on certain characteristics, concepts such as oppression as the sole cause of disparities, collective guilt ideologies, intersectional or divisive identity activism, and the limiting of freedom of conscience, thought, or speech. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which specifies the bill does not prohibit state departments from following anti-discrimination laws or complying with the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

## **Stealing Offense**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 538](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). This act classifies stealing while possessing a deadly weapon as a Class B felony. Supporting testimony was provided by the sponsor, who stated that the bill aligns with current law, which already allows for class B felony charges if a deadly weapon is used in the commission of a crime. The bill ensures consistency by including possession of the weapon during theft. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **STEM Career Awareness**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 265](#), sponsored by Senator Travis Fitzwater (R-Holts Summit). The bill requires DESE to develop a model

curriculum for school-district instruction on safe social media use and appropriate online behavior to students in grades 6 through 12 and to develop a "STEM Career Awareness Program" to increase awareness of STEM careers and relevant training or education programs for students in grades 9 through 12. Supporting testimony was presented by Science Coach who stated this is a tool by which teachers, especially in rural areas, have access to additional support in STEM areas. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **STL PD Retirement**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 357](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). The bill strengthens the definition of "earnable compensation" to exclude any funds received through a judgment or settlement of a legal action. Supporting testimony was presented by the St. Louis Police Retirement System. No opposing testimony was presented by the committee.

### **Tax Credit – Amateur Sports**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 184](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill reauthorizes a tax credit that is used to attract amateur sports events that is due to sunset August 28, 2025. There is a \$6 million cap. Supporting testimony was presented by St. Louis Sports Commission, Joplin Sports Authority, Kansas City Sports Commission, Visit KC, St. Joseph Convention and Visitor Bureau, Greater St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau, City of Kansas City, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, and Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Missouri Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus, Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce, Visit Springfield Missouri and Visit Maryland Heights who stated the tax credit is crucial to Missouri and provides an impactful tool to local communities. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit – Biodiesel Fuel**

The House Agriculture Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [HB 1317](#), sponsored by Representative Willard Haley (R-Eldon). The bill adjusts biodiesel blending and fuel tax policies by amending existing legislation to allow off-road diesel to qualify for the biodiesel blenders tax credit by changing "and" to "or" in the legal language, and proposes a committee substitute to protect blenders from penalties and interest on miscalculated tax credits. Supporting testimony was provided by Representative Willard Haley, Missouri Soybean Association, Biodiesel Coalition of Missouri, Missouri Corn Growers Association, Missouri Farm Bureau, who stated that the bill corrects an unintended exclusion of off-road diesel from tax credits, supports a \$2 billion biodiesel industry critical to Missouri's economy and farmers, enhances domestic energy production, and mitigates challenges like thin margins and federal policy uncertainty, while also benefiting soybean and corn farmers by increasing demand for their oil products. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Tax Credit – Child Care**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 455](#), sponsored by Senator Lincoln Hough (R-Springfield). This is the Senate companion to [HB 269](#). The bill establishes the "Childcare Contribution Tax Credit Act". Beginning January 1, 2025, a taxpayer may claim a tax credit for verified contributions to a childcare provider in an amount equal to 75% of the contribution. The minimum amount of any tax credit issued shall not be less

than \$100 and shall not exceed \$200,000 per tax year. The tax credit has a sunset of December 31, 2030. Additionally, the bill also establishes the “Employer Provided Childcare Assistance Tax Credit Act”. Beginning January 1, 2025, a taxpayer with two or more employees may claim a tax credit equal to 30% of the qualified childcare expenditures paid or incurred to a childcare facility and shall not exceed \$200,000 per tax year. The tax credit has a sunset of December 31, 2030. Finally, the bill also establishes the “Childcare Providers Tax Credit Act”. Beginning January 1, 2025, a childcare provider with three or more employees may claim a tax credit equal to the eligible employer withholding tax and may also claim a credit in an amount up to 30% of the capital expenditures but not if expenditures are less than \$1,000. The program has a sunset of December 31, 2030. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated Missouri loses out on over \$1.35 billion annually in revenues due to child care shortages. Additional supporting testimony was provided by United We, City of Kansas City, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, Associated Industries of Missouri, Campaign Life Missouri, Kids Win Missouri, Northland Chamber of Commerce, Cox Health, Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Missouri Catholic Conference, Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs, Missouri Alliance of Boys and Girls Club and University Health Kansas City. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate.

### **Tax Credit – Railroad Expenses**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 462](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill is the Senate companion to [HB 669](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler) and seeks to incentivize shortline railroad development by creating a tax credit for eligible taxpayers to claim up to 50% for any qualified railroad track expenditures, or for new qualified rail infrastructure expenditures. Citing there are currently over \$548 million rail funding needs and many of the shortline railroads are falling into despair. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri & Northern Arkansas Shortline Railway and informed committee members that major railroads use to own the shortlines, however due to expenses and costs, some of these railroads are either not being maintained or have been sold. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Mickelson and Co., Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Missouri Railroad Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit – Volunteer First Responder**

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 833](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Farnan (R-Stanberry). The bill establishes the "Volunteer First Responder Tax Credit Act". The bill allows those who serve as a volunteer firefighter, volunteer EMS personnel, or reserve peace officer for the entire calendar year will be allowed to claim a tax credit in an amount equal to \$250. Additionally, the bill contains a six year sunset. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Tax Deduction – Capital Gains**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate [HB 594](#), sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins (R-Bowling Green). For all tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2025, the bill authorizes an income tax deduction for 100% of all income reported as capital gains for federal income tax purposes. Senator Doug Beck (D-St. Louis) offered an amendment delaying the effective date to after capital gains top rates is lower than 1%. After a lengthy debate, the bill was ultimately returned to the calendar for further debate another day.

### **Tax Elimination – Corp Income**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 370](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove). The bill seeks to eliminate the corporate income tax incrementally over a period of five years, to be fully eliminated by calendar year 2030. Supporting testimony was presented by Freedom Principle Missouri, Associated Industries of Missouri, and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Budget Project.

### **Tax Elimination – Food/Diaper Sales**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 95](#), sponsored by Senator Patty Lewis (D-Kansas City). The bill reinstates the diaper bank tax credit that expired December 31, 2024, and modifies the definition of diaper bank to ensure all nine diaper banks in MO can qualify for the program. Additionally, the bill also seeks to authorize an income states sales tax exemption for the sale of diapers and feminine hygiene products. During discussion, a committee substitute was adopted to include a six year sunset on the diaper bank tax credit. Additionally, the committee substitute aligns the tax rate of feminine hygiene and diapers with groceries by reducing it from its current luxury tax rate of 4.225% to 1.225%. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-1 vote.

### **Tax Elimination – Income**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit [HB 798](#), sponsored by Representative Christopher Warwick (R-Bolivar). Currently, the top rate of income tax may be reduced over a period of years if certain triggers are met. The bill seeks to simplify the income tax collections by implementing a flat tax rate of 4.7% on all taxable income and removes all tax deduction triggers, and removes all existing taxable income brackets. Lastly, the bill repeals the Missouri Working Family Tax Credit Act. During Perfection, the sponsor successfully amended the bill to add provisions which phases out capital gains, modifies penalties for tax penalties incurred when a tax credit cap is reached and lowers the corporate income tax rate from 4% to 3.75%. Representative Christopher Warwick (R-Bolivar) further amended the bill by adding a provision which modified the pregnancy and maternity homes and diaper bank tax credits by allowing taxpayers to claim 100% rather than 75% of contributions. After lengthy contentious debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by a 100-53 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Tax Elimination - Personal Property**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 294](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville). The bill seeks to incrementally eliminate personal property taxes annually. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-2 vote.

### **Tax Exemption – Auctioned Property**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 245](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill is Senate companion to [HB 493](#) and creates a sales tax exemption on tangible personal property that is sold a second or any number of subsequent times after the original point of sale, at an auction. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Taxes – Emergency Services**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1268](#), sponsored by Representative Terri Violet (R-St. Peters). This is the House companion bill to [SB 33](#). In 2021, legislation referred to as “Wayfair” was passed allowing cities and counties to seek voter approval to collect a use tax for online purchases. While cities and counties already had the ability to pass a use tax, “Wayfair” was specifically passed to address online purchases. When that language was passed, it specifically related to the state, cities, and counties because they already had the ability to propose a use tax on the ballot. It did not include other specialty districts, such as 911, fire districts, or ambulance districts that do not have the authority to propose a use tax on the ballot. This bill seeks to amend the use tax laws to now include any taxing jurisdiction authorized to impose a sales tax on emergency services. The sponsor stated she is specifically seeking to authorize St. Louis, St. Charles, Clay, Platte and Green counties to collect this tax. Supporting testimony was presented by Cottleville Fire District who stated the exclusion of fire and EMS providers in these five counties to be able to ask voters for a tax to support services has led to budget shortfalls and it is time to level the playing field. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Ambulance District Association of Missouri, Missouri Ambulance Association, Florissant Valley Fire Protection District, O’Fallon Fire District and Missouri Association of Career Fire Protection Districts. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Taxes – Personal Property**

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate [HB 903](#), sponsored by Representative Richard West (R-Wentzville). The bill requires that beginning January 1, 2026, the percentage of the true value in money at which personal property is assessed will be reduced over a period of three years until it will be assessed at 18% of its true value in money. After considerable debate, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes. The House dedicated floor time Thursday morning to revisit [HB 903](#). After no further debate, the House passed the bill by an 84-63 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Taxes – Totaled Motor Vehicle**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 708](#), sponsored by Representative Philip Oehlerking (R-Ballwin). The bill allows taxing authorities to establish a proration program for payments of personal property on totaled motor vehicles by awarding a credit. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clearly defines taxing authority and defines salvage vehicle. Additionally, the bills adds exceptions if a person continues to operate a totaled vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 8-1 vote.

### **Taxes – Unrealized Gains**

The Senate General Laws Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [SJR 53](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Lee’s Summit). This constitutional amendment, if approved by voters, prohibits any taxes from being imposed on unrealized gains accrued on any asset prior to its sale. Supporting testimony was provided by AIM, which supports the bill as a constitutional protection against taxing unrealized gains—values that exist only on paper for assets like stocks, real estate, and collectibles. The witness argued that such taxation is unfair since no actual monetary gain is received and highlighted past market crashes as a risk of taxing unrealized wealth. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **Taxing Districts**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit [HB 660](#) sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). This legislation would make numerous changes to the law regarding taxing districts and, according to the sponsor, is identical to his [HB 2058](#) from 2024. During Perfection, the bill was amended and the following provisions were added:

- [HB 119](#), which modifies adjustments to the tax ceiling when new taxes are levied;
- [HB 411](#), which requires tax district mapping;
- [HB 708](#), which allows for prorated property tax payments for totaled vehicles;
- [HB 783](#), which requires adjustments to the tax ceiling be made in the same election cycle;
- [HB 816](#), which removes the requirement the assessors use the NADA when assessing vehicles;
- [HB 1086](#), which seeks to simplify taxing on short-term rentals;
- Adds a provision regarding non-profits in CIDs; and,
- Requires political subdivisions rather than election authorities to title taxing initiatives.

After little debate, the bill was Third Read and Passed by an 89-58 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

## **Telemedicine**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 710](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Knight (R-Lebanon). The bill modifies the patient-physician relationship by no longer requiring a physical examination unless it is needed to meet the standard of care. Supporting testimony was presented by SSM Health who stated Missouri is the only state not fully utilizing this technology due to prohibitions in statute. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a physician, Missouri Nurses Association, and the Missouri Hospital Association. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri State Medical Association who stated the current questionnaire technology is more analog than digital and does not replace the physician-patient relationship that develops when seeing patients face to face. Additional opposing testimony was provided by Missouri Academy of Family Physicians and Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons.

## **Therapeutic Water Projects**

The House Committee on Conservation and Natural Resources convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1534](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Meirath (R-Excelsior Springs). Currently, third class cities are authorized to acquire any real and personal property for the purpose of the construction of various water projects and for the laying of pipelines for the distribution of mineral waters, provided that the properties are acquired, constructed, and maintained and operated without increasing the indebtedness of the city and are not paid for, maintained, or operated by taxes. This bill repeals the prohibition on the use of indebtedness or taxes for the construction and operation of such projects. Supporting testimony was presented by Friends of the Wells of Excelsior Springs who stated the prohibition is outdated and needs to be repealed to allow for further economic development opportunities for Excelsior Springs. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Tobacco 21**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 231](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill specifies that the state shall preempt any local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations enacted by a county, municipality, or other political

subdivision regulating the sale of tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or vapor products. Additionally, the bill bars political subdivisions from denying a qualified applicant for a tobacco products license if the new license is for the same business or location that had a tobacco products license within the previous 24 months. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which defined minors as persons under 21, detailed a list of areas of preemption and alters the penalty provisions for the sale of nicotine products to minors. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 4-2 vote.

### **Tourism Fund**

The Senate Committee on Government Efficiency convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 555](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hudson (R-Cape Fair). Current law establishes the Division of Tourism Supplemental Revenue Fund, and provides for appropriations to the fund from certain tourism-related taxes. This act repeals such language and provides that the fund shall consist of any moneys appropriated by the General Assembly and any gifts, contributions, grants, or bequests from federal, private, or other sources. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Transient Guest Taxes**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 510](#), sponsored by Senator Joe Nicola (R-Grain Valley). Current law authorizes certain cities to impose a transient guest tax for the purpose of funding the promotion, operation, and development of tourism. The bill will allow the proceeds from the tax to be used for the operating costs of a community center. Supporting testimony was presented by the City of Independence who stated this is simply enabling legislation to only be utilized once the center is built. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Transportation Funding**

The House Committee on Transportation convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1409](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill creates two funds for highway funding. The first is for depositing any funding generated from the implementation of [SB 262](#), the Motor Fuel Tax passed in 2021. The second fund is for depositing any federal funding that is provided by the federal government for the purpose of highway construction. The sponsor stated the intent of the legislation is to ensure that funds can be properly monitored and overseen by the General Assembly and ensure funds are spent correctly. Supporting testimony was presented by a state public advocate. Opposing testimony was presented by Missourians for Transportation Investment who stated depositing any moneys from the gas tax other than the State Road Fund would be contrary to the constitution. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Missouri Municipal League who informed the committee they were concerned on the impact diverting funding would have on cities.

### **Trauma Center Designation**

The House Urban Issues Committee convened on Tuesday for a public hearing on [HB 984](#), [HB 1023](#), and [HB 1561](#), sponsored by Representatives Mark Sharp (D-Kansas City), Mansur (D-Kansas City), and Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). These bills specify that the Department of Health and Senior Services can not deny trauma center status to a hospital based on its distance from another trauma center.

Supporting testimony was provided by St. Joseph Medical Center, an ER physician, the South KC Chamber of Commerce, and Mercy Health Systems, who stated that the bill modernizes Missouri's

trauma center regulations by eliminating the outdated 15-mile restriction. They argued that the rule unnecessarily disqualifies hospitals like St. Joseph Medical Center, leading to longer transport times, delays in care, and increased strain on higher-level trauma centers. Removing the restriction would improve healthcare access, reduce ER wait times, and allow EMS to better allocate resources, ultimately enhancing patient care and efficiency in Missouri's trauma system. Opposing testimony was provided by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) Committee on Trauma (COT) Missouri Chapter, who stated that the "15-mile rule" prevents unnecessary lower-level trauma centers near higher-level ones, ensuring patient volume for clinical proficiency and avoiding delays from secondary transfers. They emphasized that the rule has been legally upheld, there are already three higher-level trauma centers within 15 miles of St. Joseph's Medical Center, and that the Time Critical Diagnosis Advisory Committee should handle trauma system updates using evidence-based guidelines.

### **Treatment Courts**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 82](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Griffith (R-Jefferson City). The bill requires all circuit courts to establish a treatment court division before August 28, 2027. Additionally, each treatment court division must have a veterans treatment court. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which adds mental health treatment courts to the provisions of the bill. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

### **Uniform Fiduciary Income/Principal Act**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 246](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill establishes the Missouri Uniform Fiduciary Income and Principal Act, which modifies and updates provisions relating to trust and estate administration which have not been updated since 2001. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-2 vote.

### **Uniform Public Expression Protection Act**

The Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [SB 503](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Bonne Terre). This act establishes the "Uniform Public Expression Protection Act," creating procedures for dismissing civil actions based on protected speech, government communications, or public concern matters. It replaces current special motion provisions, allows stays on proceedings during dismissal motions, and mandates expedited rulings. Prevailing parties may recover legal costs, and the act applies to cases filed after August 28, 2025. Supporting testimony was provided by Missouri Right to Life, Missouri Press Association, Institute for Free Speech, and MO Broadcasters Association, who stated that the bill protects against frivolous lawsuits that intimidate individuals and organizations from speaking out. They emphasized the bill's importance in preserving free speech, helping journalists and news organizations avoid costly lawsuits, and strengthening Missouri's current inadequate anti-SLAPP protections. No opposing testimony was provided.

### **Utility Omnibus**

The House Committee on Utilities convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 4](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill reclassifies the pipelines in Missouri which transport liquids and gasses from real property to personal property for the purpose of county tax assessments. The intent of the legislation is to standardize the assessment rates for pipelines which

would allow for uniformity across the counties of Missouri in how these assets are depreciated. Additionally, the bill allows water, sewer, and gas utilities to use a future test year as part of the traditional 11-month rate case process; repeals certain provisions relating to maximum penalties for violations of federally mandated natural gas safety standards and provides that the maximum penalties shall not exceed an amount as determined by the Secretary of Transportation of the United States; and allows gas companies to offer a discount for large users, which also includes consumer protections. During bill progression, the following changes were made:

- Added language regarding solar grandfathering to protect a handful of older smaller solar generation facilities;
- Allows members of sewer districts to be compensated for their services of attending meetings;
- Raises the PSC assessment cap from 0.35 to .05 for the additional staff needed;
- Increases the Office of Public Counsel funding from \$2 million to \$5 million to account for the added duties;
- Ensures utilities provide an open-access option for vendors to execute energy efficiency programs;
- Clarifies how a utility will treat customers who opt out of having smart meters;
- Modifies the hot weather rules;
- Adds [SB 186](#), regarding CWIP being included in rates for the construction of any new gas-generating unit;
- Requires a utility to have reliable dispatchable power available before retiring a power plant;
- Allows large energy consumers to purchase renewable energy credits from the market;
- Modifies PISA by adding natural gas units to the list of qualifying electric plants and increases the deferral allowed to 90% for generating units and storage systems starting in 2025;
- Provides clarity to the sale and process when a large water public utility is acquiring a small water system;
- Allows a 25% discount by gas corporations when the customer is new and the new load is expected to be at least 270,000 Centum Cubic Feet;
- Adds low-income utility assistance to consumers;
- Allows the PSC to contract with experts for guidance and implementation outside of OA to hire a financial advisor or outside counsel due to the time constraints of implementation; and,
- Reforms Missouri's Integrated Resource Planning (IRP) process by establishing a one-year contested IRP case with the PSC.

Supporting testimony was presented by Evergy who stated without a means to ensure reliable stable power generation there can be no further discussion of economic development opportunities for Missouri. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Liberty Utilities, Summit Utilities, Ameren Missouri, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Civic Council of Kansas City, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Economic Development Council, Strata Solar, Missouri Association of Sewer Districts, Energy Policy Network, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Spire Missouri Natural Gas. Opposing testimony was presented by Missouri Veterans Endeavor who stated utility debt is one of the number one contributing factors to housing instability for veterans and this legislation would only increase that utility debt for veterans. Additional opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Industrial Energy Consumers, Missouri Council of the Blind, Midwest Energy Consumers Group, Consumers Council of Missouri, Sierra Club, AARP, Renew Missouri, Missouri Coalition for the Environment, Epiphany United Church of Christ. Informational testimony was

presented by the Missouri Public Service Commission. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the committee immediately moved into executive session to discuss passage of the bill. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 17-4-2 vote.

The House took up and dedicated floor time Thursday afternoon to debate [SB 4](#), sponsored by Senator Cierpiot, highlighted above. After a lengthy debate, the bill was Truly Agreed to and Finally Passed by a 96-44 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Governor for signature or veto.

### **Veteran Alternative Therapy**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 90](#), sponsored by Senator Stephen Webber (D-Columbia). The bill seeks to provide \$3 million to go towards a clinical trial on the efficacy of using alternative medicines and therapies, including, but not limited to, the use of psilocybin for the medical treatment for mental health disorders. Specifically, for patients that are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, treatment-resistant depression, substance abuse disorders, or who require end-of-life care. Additionally, the bill is narrowly tailored to apply only to veterans with qualifying conditions. Finally, oversight of the program is placed under the Department of Mental Health. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which allows victims of sexual trafficking to use psilocybin for treatment. After a lengthy discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-1 vote.

### **Veteran Benefits**

The House Committee on General Laws convened on Tuesday evening for a public hearing on [HB 399](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Griffith (R-Jefferson City). According to the bill, except as permitted under federal law, no person can receive compensation for advising or assisting any individual with regards to any veteran's benefits matter. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Association of Veterans Organizations who stated without this legislation predatory companies will be allowed to continue unchecked and veterans will continue to receive benefits at reduced rates to pay the fees for these companies. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a state public advocate. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Veteran Property Taxes**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SJR 14](#), sponsored by Senator Angela Walton Mosley (D-Florissant). Upon voter approval, the resolution exempts disabled veterans that were prisoners of war, from property taxes on primary residents. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to clarify the resolution only applies to a veteran that was a prisoner of war and is 100% disabled. Once modified, the committee passed the resolution by a 6-0 vote.

### **Virtual School Access**

The House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1516](#), sponsored by Representative Josh Hurlbert (R-Smithville). The bill allows adults over 21 without a high school diploma to enroll in state approved virtual courses or full-time virtual programs offered by their resident district or charter school. Supporting testimony was presented by the Graduation Alliance who stated in Missouri there are currently 400,000 adults who lack a high school diploma and this legislation would simply open another path for adults 21 and over to finally receive their diplomas. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri NEA who stated the

legislation, as written, would divert funds from the foundation formula but would like to find a way to expand current programs without diverting funds. Informational testimony was presented by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

### **Voting Rights**

The House Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 617](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). Currently, a person on probation or parole for a felony conviction is not entitled to vote until he or she is finally discharged. The bill allows a person on probation or parole to vote, unless they were convicted of a felony or misdemeanor connected with the right of suffrage. Supporting testimony was presented by Secure Democracy USA who stated studies have shown those who receive their civil rights back drops the recidivism rate by 50%. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Secure Election Project, Americans for Prosperity, Women Against Registry and War Family Foundation, Campaign Legal Center, Missouri Voter Protection Coalition, NAACP, Missouri Appleseed, National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis, ACLU of Missouri, Empower Missouri, League of Women Voters of Missouri, Reach Healthcare Foundation, 3 Daughters and 1,000 Sons and dozens of private citizens. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate.

### **Waterways and Ports**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 125](#), sponsored by Senator Steve Roberts (D-St. Louis). In 2023, [SB 265](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Bean (R-Holcomb) was passed and signed into law. The bill established the “Waterways and Ports Trust Fund”, and provided that land eligible for projects under the fund be owned or held in a long-term lease by the Missouri Port Authority. Due to the way current law is worded, the St. Louis Port Authority is unable to receive funds from the trust fund because it manages property owned by the City of St. Louis, rather than leasing or owning it outright. This bill makes a simple change in the law to include property owned by the City of St. Louis and managed by a Missouri port authority. Additionally, the bill includes language to require that in order for funds to be spent out of the Fund, they must first be requested by a Missouri port authority for a statutorily permitted port purpose, as intended. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill Consent by a 6-0 vote.

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1346](#), sponsored by Representative Mike Steinmeyer (R-Sugar Creek). The bill makes several changes to the Waterways and Ports Trust Fund and modifies provisions relating to the port authority commission. The sponsor stated his intent with the legislation is to provide additional funding to Port KC, remove restrictions, and provide Port KC additional tools it needs to drive an even greater economic impact for Missouri. Supporting testimony was presented by Port KC who stated the bill would maximize government efficiency, support job growth and help grow the state’s economy. Additionally, the Port Authorities Act has not be substantively changed since 1974 and there are modernization and efficiencies that need to be put in place. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry and JE Dunn. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Workers Comp TTD**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 72](#), sponsored by Representative Tim Taylor (R-Bunceton). The bill seeks to calculate the rate of

temporary total disability compensation for volunteer firefighters and volunteer first responders. Specifically, the temporary total disability benefits will be based on the volunteer's weekly pay at their regular place of employment. Additionally, the bill outlines how to calculate benefits if the volunteer's regular place of employment's wages are not fixed or cannot be ascertained. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which extends the sunset on the benefits. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 15-1 vote, with Representative Bryant Wolfen (R-Ste. Genevieve) being the lone no vote.

### **Zero-Cost Adoption Fund**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1012](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis) and HB 1376, sponsored by Representative Melissa Schmidt (R-Eldridge). The bills are identical and establish a fund to offset costs associated with adoptions originating from Missouri's Foster Care system and offer a tax credit for any Missouri citizen which contributes to the fund. Supporting testimony was presented by Campaign Life Missouri who stated this legislation allows for a first come first serve basis but does incentivize not only citizens but corporations to donate to the fund to receive tax breaks. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Foster Adopt Connect, Missouri Right to Life and Missouri Coalition for Children. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Hearing Schedules:**

[House](#)  
[Senate](#)

### **Calendars:**

[House](#)  
[Senate](#)

### **Key Upcoming Dates:**

- March 17-21, 2025 – Legislative Spring Break
- April 21, 2025 – Easter Holiday – No Session
- May 9, 2025 – Fiscal Year 2026 budget bills must be passed by 6 pm
- May 16, 2025 – Last day of Legislative Session – adjourn by 6pm
- July 14, 2025 – Last day for the Governor to sign or veto legislation
- September 10, 2025 – Veto Session

*-End of Report-*



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