



## CAPITOL REPORT – WEEK 7

FEBRUARY 21, 2025

**Weekly Overview:** Mother Nature was no match for the will of the legislature this week. Despite calls for heavy snowfalls and single digit temperatures, both chambers conducted business as usual this week. Several priority bills were the subject of debate and action this week, including a major reform of utility regulation ([SB 4](#)), Elimination of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion programs in all state departments ([HB 742](#)), liability protection for Bayer's Roundup pesticide ([HB 544](#)), and passage of a bill to reduce the statute of limitations on personal injury claims from 5 to 2 years ([HB 68](#)). The Senate has now Third Read and Passed 19 bills while the House has only Third Read and Passed 8. This is a major role reversal compared to the last legislative session and has many wondering how long the Senate can continue to stay positive and productive.

Only one week remains for the filing of new legislation and only three weeks remain before the legislative Spring Break.

### *In the News...*

- Missouri House members of the Budget Committee sent a clear and concise message to the Missouri Public Defender's Office that they will not tolerate the continued employment of a man convicted of two felonies involving the rape and murder of his nine-year-old stepdaughter in 2007. Republican leaders made it clear that, unless some immediate action is taken to dismiss the individual, the FY 2026 budget will be zeroed out.
- On Monday, President Trump nominated Ed Martin to be the top prosecutor in the District of Columbia on a permanent basis. Martin, a Missouri native, is President of the Phyllis Schlafly Eagles. As Interim U.S. Attorney, Martin oversaw the dismissals of hundreds of cases involving those accused of rioting the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021. His nomination will require advice and consent of the U.S. Senate.
- On Tuesday, Governor Mike Kehoe signed [Executive Order 25-18](#) which directs all Missouri agencies to eliminate DEI initiatives. The order prohibits the use of state funds for DEI and prevents agencies from considering DEI in hiring decisions. The order requires equal protection of all people; eliminates all public funds for DEI; prohibits DEI as a consideration for state hiring practices; and requires every department to complete a compliance review within 30 days of the signage of the order.
- The Department of Health and Senior Services announced Missouri's cannabis industry crossed \$3.5 billion in cumulative sales in January. January saw the industry hit that total with a \$108.7 million boost from the recreational sector and \$14.7 million in new medical revenue. Cumulative sales, which track revenue since medical sales began in 2020 and boosted recreational sales launched in early 2023, crossed the \$3 billion mark in September of 2024.

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## **340B Drugs**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday evening for a public hearing on [HB 784](#), sponsored by Representative Tara Peters (R-Rolla). The bill prohibits health carriers and pharmacy benefits managers from discriminating against entities that dispense 340B drugs, including less reimbursement, imposing different terms, and other discriminatory practices. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Primary Care Association who stated this legislation ensures the reimbursement scale stays true and the intended recipient of the discount actually receives the discount. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a state public advocate. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Hospital Association who stated they are not opposed to FQHCs being protected from discriminatory behavior but the policy should also apply to hospitals and not just one entity. Additional opposing testimony was provided by Americas Health Insurance Plans, Missouri Insurance Coalition.

## **Accounts Fraud**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [SB 98](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill creates the offense of financial institution accounts fraud. The offense is committed if a customer or third-party accesses, uses or establishes an account and presents any type of fraudulent pretense to withdraw funds from the institution or other accounts. Additionally, the bill establishes criminal penalty provisions. During debate, the sponsor successfully offered a Senate Substitute which added a provision exempting premium finance agreements from the commercial financing disclosure law. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote.

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financing disclosure law. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote.

### **Adult Cabaret Performances**

The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Civil and Criminal convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 295](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Lee's Summit). The bill creates the offense of engaging in an adult cabaret performance if such performance is on public property or in a location where the performance could be viewed by a person who is not an adult. Opposing testimony was presented by Inclusion + who stated this legislation violates the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and would hurt local businesses and communities by removing boosts in sales and lodging taxes for these communities. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the American Civil Liberties Union of Missouri, PROMO, several parents and drag performers. No supporting testimony was provided to the committee.

### **Advanced Manufacturing Recruitment**

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 755](#), sponsored by Representative Philip Oehlerking (R-Ballwin). The bill seeks to incentive manufacturing companies to reside in Missouri by creating a tax credit. Specifically, in order to be eligible for the tax credit, a company must invest at least \$1 billion in new capital and create at least 500 new jobs, 150 that are reserved for Missouri full-time residents. In return, the company will receive a 20% capital investment credit, rewarded in four installments based on the company's progress in fulfilling the company's investments. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by 10-1 vote.

### **Ambulance Service Reimbursement**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1133](#), sponsored by Representative John Martin (R-Columbia). Currently, ambulance services that are owned and operated by an entity owned and operated by the state are exempt from being required to pay an ambulance service reimbursement allowance tax. This bill repeals that exemption. The sponsor's intent with the legislation is to remove the exemption from the University of Missouri so they may also draw down federal funding. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Ambulance Association who stated this would simply allow the University to participate in the federal program and is critical for expanded services for all ambulance districts. Additional supporting testimony was provided by MU Healthcare Ambulance Board. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Assessment Growth Rate**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 517](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Matthiesen (R-O'Fallon). Currently, new revenue that any political subdivision can gain from reassessed value of property is limited to three different factors: actual assessed value; consumer price index (CPI); and 5%, whichever number is less. The bill seeks to move that 5% cap to 3% of new revenue that can be gained by the value of reassessed value. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Assessor Elections**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Wednesday to debate [HJR 23](#), sponsored by Carolyn Caton (R-Blue Springs). Upon voter approval, the amendment would require the Jackson County

assessor to be elected. After a brief debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote.

### **Ballot Measures**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 152](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill seeks to create new provisions to restrict access from foreign entities to spend monies on local ballot measure elections. Supporting testimony was presented by Americans for Public Trust who stated a recent report identified over \$13 million tied to foreign nationals being spent on Missouri elections and this legislation is crucial to restrict outside interest groups from influencing elections. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Heritage Action for America and Campaign Life Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Ballot Summary Language**

The House Committee on Elections convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 684](#), sponsored by Representative John Simmons (R-Washington). The bills are similar and removes the authority of the courts to edit the summary statement or ballot language of any ballot measure proposed by the General Assembly. However, [HB 684](#) adds a provision to increase the word limit for summary statements from 50 words to 150 words. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added [HB 414](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Murphy (R-St. Louis) to the title, as the bills are similar, to create one legislative vehicle. Additionally, the substitute increases the word limit for summary statements from 50 words to 100 words, to align with initiative petition summary length. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-2 vote.

### **Beginning Farmer**

The House Committee on Agriculture convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 1042](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). Currently, an individual owner of farmland who sells all or a portion of land to a "beginning farmer" is allowed a tax deduction from his or her gross income. The bill broadens the scope of who is allowed a tax deduction on gross income to now include firms, partners, corporations, partnerships, shareholders in S Corps and members of an LLC. Supporting testimony was presented by Missouri Farm Bureau who stated farmers are seeking an avenue to pass generational farms on and very little agricultural land is not held by an LLC. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Pork Association, Missouri Corn Growers Association and Missouri Cattlemen's Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Born-Alive Act**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday evening to discuss passage of [HB 195](#), sponsored by Representative Brian Seitz (R-Branson). The bill establishes the "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act". The bill mandates that a child born alive during or after an abortion or attempted abortion will have the same rights, privileges, and immunities as any other person, citizens, and resident of Missouri, including any other live-born child. Additionally, any person who intentionally performs or attempts to perform an overt act that kills a child born alive is guilty of first-degree murder. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which changed "intentionally" to "purposefully" and added [HB 1119](#), which is identical, to the title to create one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 12-5 vote.

## **Burglary**

The House Crime and Public Safety Committee convened Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 1218](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O'Fallon). The bill expands the offense of second-degree burglary to include unlawfully entering or remaining in a restricted area of a commercial business, with a first offense classified as a Class B misdemeanor and a second or subsequent offense as a Class A misdemeanor. Supporting testimony was provided by the bill sponsor, who stated that the bill aims to address unlawful entry into restricted business areas, escalating penalties for repeat offenses, and preventing potential theft or violence. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **Career-Tech Certificate Program**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened to discuss passage of [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 post-secondary 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 discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added clarifying language specifying EMT and paramedic certification are offered. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

## **Catalytic Converters**

The House Crime and Public Safety Committee convened Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 42](#), sponsored by Representative Hardy Billington (R-Poplar Bluff). The bill specifies that a record for the sale of a catalytic converter must include the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) of the vehicle from which the catalytic converter was removed. Supporting testimony was provided by representatives from the Recycled Materials Association and Advantage Metals, who highlighted efforts to deter catalytic converter theft, such as VIN etching and painting as a public service by law enforcement. They explained that the high value of metals like rhodium, which peaked at nearly \$30,000 per ounce in 2021, made theft lucrative. Additionally, it was noted that while VIN etching is not currently mandated for manufacturers, implementing such changes in vehicle production takes time. No opposing testimony was provided.

## **Cemeteries**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 632](#), sponsored by Representative Richard West (R-Wentzville). The bill adds the definition of "human and pet cemetery" to current statute, which would allow for the creation of cemeteries in which both human remains and the remains of other creatures could be interred and memorialized at the discretion of the lot holder. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

## **Chaplains as Volunteers**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [SB 49](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). The bill allows public school districts and public charter schools to employ a chaplain or allow a chaplain to volunteer. Additionally, background checks shall be required and the chaplain is not required to be a certified teacher in order to work or volunteer for the district or charter school. Finally, the bill requires the school district or charter school to vote to adopt a policy authorizing

employment or volunteering of chaplains. During debate, the sponsor successfully offered a Senate Substitute which removed the word public from the bill. The bill was further amended by the sponsor by the removal of the provision requiring each school district and charter school to vote on whether to adopt a policy authorizing the employment or volunteer service of a chaplain. Senator Karla May (D-St. Louis) successfully amended the bill by requiring registration with the Armed Forces Chaplain Board to participate in the district programs. Senator Maggie Nurrenbern (D-Kansas City) further amended the bill by adding language that school chaplain, unless a certified teacher, will not be teaching classes. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday and without further debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 27-6 vote. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

### **Child Protection Omnibus**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [SB 83](#), sponsored by Senator Jamie Burger (R-Benton). The bill modifies several provisions relating to child protection. Specifically, the bill modifies the "Champion for Children" tax credit by increasing the amount that can be claimed to 70%; allows homeless children to obtain copies of vital documents free of charge; adds APRNs and Physician Assistants to the list of SAFE CARE providers; and raises the age of admissibility of certain evidence from 14 to 18. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which removed the provision regarding safe care providers. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

### **Childcare Facilities - Allergies**

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday evening to discuss passage of [HB 222](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Schulte (R-New Bloomfield). The bill adds childcare facilities to the list which doctors may prescribe epinephrine auto-injector. Additionally, the bill requires childcare facilities and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to develop allergy prevention policies. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added [HB 580](#), sponsored by Representative Emily Weber (D-Kansas City), and is identical, to the bill to create one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 17-0 vote.

### **Civil Proceeding Omnibus**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 83](#), sponsored by Representative Rudy Veit (R-Wardsville). The bill seeks to modify provisions relating to civil proceedings. Specifically, the bill includes the following provisions:

- Waives any required fees for the issuance or copy of a birth certificate if the request is made by a prosecuting or circuit attorney or the Attorney General;
- Establishes the Missouri Uniform Fiduciary Income and Principal Act;
- Expands and adds mental health court to the list of treatment court divisions; establishes procedures to change an attorney in workers compensations cases;
- Establishes procedures for complaints, discipline, and removal of administrative law judges; establishes the Uniform Unregulated Child Custody Transfer Act;
- Modifies the definition of "adult" and "child" in provisions relating to protection orders;
- Establishes the Missouri Electronic Wills and Electronic Estate Planning Documents Act;
- Provides a process to file a motion to have a record made confidential on any automated case management system;
- Repeals the expiration date on the Basic Civil Legal Services Fund;

- Modifies references to the title and sections of law of Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction Act;
- Grants county commissions the authority to set juror pay at the local level rather than adhering to a state-mandated rate;
- Increases the civil case filing surcharge from \$15 to \$20;
- Raises the age for admissibility of statements of children and vulnerable persons in criminal cases from 14 to 18;
- Modifies exclusions of personal information in court documents;
- Establishes the "Uniform Interstate Depositions and Discovery Act", establishes the "Uniform Public Expression Protection Act";
- Modifies provisions relating to privileged information received by probation or parole officers; and,
- Adds that a person who pleads guilty to a class E felony must pay a fee of \$46 payable to the Crime Victims' Compensation Fund.

Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Department of Labor, the Supreme Court, Missouri Press Association, Missouri Prosecutors Association, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Network Against Child Abuse, Institute for Free Speech and the Missouri Bar supported the bill. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Class Action Suits**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 534](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). 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. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to mirror the Senate companion bill and made formatting changes throughout the bill, modified language to conform Missouri court rules to Federal court rules and removed the provision regarding findings by the court in cases tried without a jury or without an advisory jury. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Commercial Activity Omnibus**

The House Crime and Public Safety Committee convened Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 757](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill strengthens regulations on catalytic converter transactions by expanding licensing requirements, enforcing stricter record-keeping, and increasing retention periods. It also criminalizes the theft and unlawful possession of detached catalytic converters, revises self-storage sale regulations, and prohibits misleading solicitations. Additionally, it allows motor vehicles to be sold on Sundays. Supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Self Storage Owners Association, advocating for improved methods of advertising foreclosed storage unit sales. Opposing testimony was provided by Advantage Metals and Recycling and the Recycled Materials Association, who only opposed certain aspects of the bill, particularly new record-keeping requirements, arguing that their companies already maintain stringent documentation and cooperate with law enforcement.

### **Conservation Commission**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HJR 43](#), sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). Currently, the Conservation

Commission consists of four members, appointed by the Governor, with no more than two members from the same political party. Upon voter approval, this resolution would allow the number, qualifications, and terms of the Commission members to be set by law, with no more than half of the members from the same political party and each member residing in a different Congressional district. Additionally, the resolution also specifies that beginning on January 1st, the year following approval, 10% of revenue derived from the Conservation Sales and Use Tax will go for duties and responsibilities of the Division of State Parks within the Department of Natural Resources and 10% for the duties and responsibilities of local political subdivisions in which land owned by the Department of Conservation is located. The resolution specifies the manner in which the portion of the revenues to local political subdivisions is to be distributed. Finally, the resolution requires the Department of Conservation to pay property taxes on real property, the same as private citizens. During committee discussion members expressed concern this is government overreach, while others decried the large surplus of taxpayer dollars held by the Conservation Commission. Supporting testimony was presented by a state public advocate. Opposition testimony was presented by a private citizen who stated the Department of Conservation is a model for the nation and political oversight is counterintuitive of what Missouri citizens intended when the Commission was created. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Conservation Federation of Missouri, Nature Conservancy, Ducks Unlimited and a private citizen. Informational testimony was presented by the Department of Conservation.

### **County Officials**

The House Committee on Local Government convened on Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 249](#) sponsored by Representative Rodger Reedy (R-Windsor). 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. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri County Collectors Association who stated the online auction provisions would allow more people access to participate in auctions. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Association of Public Administrators, Missouri Association of County Auditors and Missouri Association of Counties. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Death Penalty**

The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Civil and Criminal convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 196](#), sponsored Senator Mike Moon (R-Ash Grove). The bill clarifies the death penalty may be sought as a punishment in offenses of statutory rape in the first degree and the sex trafficking of children in the first degree. Opposing testimony was presented by Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty who stated life in prison without the possibility of parole is a sufficient punishment and they are against the death penalty in all cases. No supporting testimony was presented by the committee.

### **DEI Expenditures**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Monday on [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. After a lengthy, and often heated debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote. On Thursday, the bill was revisited and after considerable debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 108-50 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **Dental Care in Correctional Centers**

The House Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 122](#), sponsored by Representative Rudy Veit (R-Wardsville). The bill exempts corporations contracted with the state to provide dental care in correctional centers from the requirements for corporation licensure to practice dentistry. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

### **Dental Hygiene Interstate Compact**

The House Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 56](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Coleman (R-Grain Valley). 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. The sponsor stated out of the 114 counties in Missouri, 108 of them have designated dental shortage areas and this compact could help address the shortages. He also stated the compact does not diminish the current standards in Missouri. Supporting testimony was presented by the National Center for Interstate Compacts at the Council of State Governments who stated ten states currently have this compact with 16 others that have the legislation pending, including Missouri. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Dental Hygienist Association, Association of Dental Support Organizations and the Missouri Dental Association. Opposing testimony was presented by the American Association of Dental Boards who stated they are opposed to the clinical exam portion of the legislation and believe they have a better idea of how the compact language should be drafted.

### **Design-Build Omnibus**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time on Monday to debate [SB 10](#), sponsored by Senator Lincoln Hough (R-Springfield). The bill, as filed, repeals the sunset date of September 1, 2026, for political subdivision authority to utilize the design-build method for construction and repeal the expiration date allowing political subdivisions to continue to use the construction manager-at-risk method. The intent is to provide political subdivisions flexibility to use contracting options to ensure efficiency and cost effectiveness. During debate, the sponsor offered a substitute to expand the bill which created an omnibus sunset bill. Specifically, the substitute removes the sunset on the wood energy producers tax credit; champion for children; diaper banks; meat processing facilities; motion media production project (Show Me Act); entertainment industry jobs act; higher ethanol fuel; biodiesel retail sales; biodiesel production; urban farms; financial incentives for relocated jobs; rolling stock; participation in athletic competitions designated for opposite sex; retirement benefits for substitute teachers; Missouri Save Adolescents from Experimentation (SAFE) Act; Medicaid Managed Care Organization Reimbursement; Missouri Emergency Response Commission; Pharmacy FRA; Specialty Agricultural Crops; electronic monitoring of persons found guilty of violating protection orders; basic civil legal services fund;

alternative incentives under Missouri Works Program; intermediate care facility for the intellectually disabled FRA; ground ambulance FRA; nursing facility FRA; Hospital FRA; and agricultural production. Due to the inclusion of the SAFE Act, Senate Democrats held the floor and offered several amendments from removing the 1% tax on groceries to amendments relating to same sex marriage by removing references of marriage between a man and woman. After nearly six hours of debate, the amendments failed and the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote.

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning to consider passage of [HB 413](#), [HB 513](#), and [HB 536](#), sponsored by Representatives David Casteel (R-High Ridge), John Voss (R-Cape Girardeau), and Dane Diehl (R-Butler). The bills are the House companions to [SB 10](#) as filed, highlighted above. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to combine all three bills into one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill Consent by an 11-0 vote.

### **DNR Permitting Process**

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food Production, and Outdoor Resources convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [SB 269](#), sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). The bill seeks to clarify current landfill permitting processes that are done through DNR, to ensure a local ordinance that goes into effect after the permitting process has started will not have a retroactive effect on that process. The sponsor informed committee members that the permitting process can take up to 5-7 years and people invest millions into these kinds of projects and when the rules change in the middle of that process, you potentially lose all that investment that has been made and ultimately have no path to get a project approved. It was also noted that very few people want a landfill as their neighbor, even though Missouri DNR has many stringent requirements to protect the neighbors and the environment. Supporting testimony was presented by Presidio Environmental who stated the bill is needed to simply clarify a misinterpretation of this particular statute which has provided local governments ultimate veto authority over decisions, not just landfills. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Derek Stanley, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Pork Association, Infra, Missouri Corn Growers Association, and the Missouri Soybean Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **DOT Spending Veto**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HJR 46](#), sponsored by Representative Louis Riggs (R-Hannibal). Upon voter approval, this proposed Constitutional amendment would give the General Assembly the power to veto any Department of Transportation spending plan, including the Department's Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. Supporting testimony was presented by a state public advocate who stated MoDOT is in need of oversight as the spending is out of control. Informational testimony was presented by MoDOT who stated the STIP is a federal requirement and must be utilized to drawn down federal funds. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Education – Parental Rights**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SJR 6](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville). Upon voter approval, the resolutions provides that the government shall not deny or infringe upon a parent's fundamental right to participate in and direct the education of his their child, the right to access the curricula and lesson plans, the right to educate a

child in a public school that does not teach students or train teachers on critical race theory or diversity-equity-inclusion, and the right to educate a child in a public school that is not required to conform its curriculum to statewide learning standards. Opposing testimony was presented by the ACLU of Missouri whose opposition stemmed from the divisive concepts, critical race theory, diversity, equity, and inclusion provisions. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Elections Omnibus**

The House Committee on Elections convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 507](#), sponsored by Representative Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton). This is the House companion bill to [SB 182](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo) and modifies several provisions regarding elections and election authorities. Specifically, the bill includes the following provisions:

- Currently, the filing period for candidates, unless otherwise specified, is from the 17<sup>th</sup> Tuesday prior to the election through the 14<sup>th</sup> Tuesday prior to the election. The bill moves the filing period by one week, from the 16<sup>th</sup> Tuesday to the 13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday prior to the election. The bill also provides that if the 13<sup>th</sup> Tuesday is a holiday, the next day will be the last day of filing;
- The bill allows election notifications be sent by email;
- Specifies that lists of absentee voters with permanent disabilities shall be kept confidential and shall not be posted or displayed in an area open to the public nor shown to any unauthorized person;
- Current law provides that votes for write-in candidates are only counted for candidates who have filed a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate. Language was added that provides an exemption to this requirement in instances where no candidate has filed for the office in question. This repeals the exemption so that write-in candidates are only counted when a declaration of intent to be a write-in candidate has been filed with the proper election authority;
- Adds threatening to harm or engaging in conduct reasonably calculated to harass or alarm an election official or a member of one's family as a class one election offenses; and,
- Expands a provision of law governing the casting and counting of provisional ballots to all public elections, rather than just primary or general elections.

Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities who stated this legislation is necessary to update outdated statutes, opens voting options for those with disabilities and gives additional protections to election authorities and volunteers. Additional supporting testimony was presented by Secure Democracy USA, Secure Election Project and Missouri Voter Protection Coalition. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate.

### **Emergency Response Commission**

The House Committee on Budget convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 70](#), sponsored by Representative Tim Taylor (R-Bunceton). The bill reauthorizes the Missouri Emergency Response Commission to be able to collect fees from August 2024 to August 2031. During committee discussion members suggested completely removing the sunset to avoid any future lapses of reauthorizing a fee needed to support a vital service and suggested adding an Emergency Clause to the bill as the fee needs to be collected. The committee also suggested moving the collection date to March from August. Supporting testimony was presented by the State Emergency Management Agency who informed the committee on how the collected fee affects all the communities and first responders. Additionally, the committee was informed that changing the date of the collection would violate 40 CFR Part 370 of federal law and cannot be moved. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri

Petroleum and Convenience Association, Fire Service Alliance, Missouri Association of Councils of Government and the Missouri Ambulance Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **EMS State Advisory Council**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 313](#), sponsored by Representative Bennie Cook (R-Houston). The bill modifies provisions relating to the State Advisory Council on Emergency Medical Services. Specifically, the bill changes the amount of council members from 16 to no fewer than 13 and removes the requirement that one member must be from St. Louis City. Additionally, the bill alters the procedure for electing a chairperson and removes the provision that the regional EMS advisory committees must serve as resources for identifying potential members of the council. After no discussion the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Expert Testimony**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 238](#), sponsored by Senator Jamie Burger (R-Benton). This is the Senate companion bill to [HB 263](#), sponsored by Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater) and modifies provision regarding admissibility of expert testimony to mirror the Federal Rules of Evidence. Supporting testimony was presented by Midwest Sterilization Corporation who stated this legislation is necessary to avoid confusion within the courts and level the playing field between in-state companies and out-of-state companies. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Healthcare Services Group of Jefferson City, Missouri Hospital Association, American Tort Reform Association, Missouri Civil Justice Reform Coalition, American Property Casualty Insurance Association, Missouri Association of Defense Lawyers and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Circuit Judges Association who stated weight and credibility should be weighed by juries and not by circuit judges. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Missouri Association of Trial Attorneys.

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss [HB 263](#), sponsored by Representative Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater). The bill is the House companion to [SB 238](#), highlighted above. Committee discussion and testimony mirrored that of the House hearing.

### **Firearms - Open Carry**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure, and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 74](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hudson (R-Cape Fair). Under this legislation, political subdivisions would be prohibited from banning the open carrying of firearms. Any political subdivision that violates this law could be imposed a penalty of \$50,000 per occurrence. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-1 vote.

### **Fire Protection District Board Powers**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 271](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). Current law provides fire protection district boards the power to adopt and amend fire protection and fire prevention ordinance. The bill prohibits fire protection district boards from imposing regulations or requiring permits for the building or alteration of farm buildings or farm structures. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Pork Association who stated installation of fire sprinkler systems in agriculture buildings are cost prohibitive and a recommendation should not become an ordinance. Additional supporting

testimony was provided by Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Corn Growers Association and Missouri Soybean Association. The Robertson Fire Protection Districts also provided supporting testimony but asked for a provision to be included prohibiting “self-dealing” by fire protection district board members. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House Committee on Agriculture convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 533](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). This is the House companion bill to [SB 271](#), highlighted above. Committee discussion and testimony mirrored that of the Senate hearing with the exception of the Legal Animal Defense Fund and Pogo who presented opposing testimony and stated this legislation does not take into account future technologies for fire suppression.

### **First Responder Recruitment**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [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 discussion, 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. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

### **Foster Youth**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 945](#), sponsored by Representative Jamie Gragg (R-Ozark). This bill changes the current statutory reference of “Foster Care Bill of Rights” to “Foster Youth Bill of Rights” and seeks to provide a clearer guide of departmental procedures regarding placement of children. Additionally, the bill provides a clear definition of kinship foster parent adoption. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 15-0 vote.

### **Funeral Related Services**

The House Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [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. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 19-0 vote.

### **Geological Survey Records**

The Senate Agriculture, Food Production, and Outdoor Resources Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 157](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Bonne Terre). According to the bill, all information obtained by the Missouri Geological Survey shall remain confidential and shall not be released to the public in response to any request, except certain information relating to water usage. The provisions of the bill apply only to information obtained from major water

users relating to water used on agricultural land in this state. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 3-2 vote.

### **Hazing**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday to debate [SB 167](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill provides a person who takes the initiative to call 911 when someone is need of immediate medical assistance shall not be found guilty of the offense of hazing. Additionally, the bill provides immunity for the person who remains at the scene until medical assistance arrives, and to the person who rendered aid to the hazing victim before assistance arrived. During debate, the sponsor attempted to offer a Senate Substitute which changed the title to Danny's Law. Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold) further amended the bill by removing "or she" from the entirety of the bill. After considerable debate the bill was ultimately returned to the calendar for debate another day. On Wednesday, the bill was revisited and the sponsor withdrew his original substitute. The sponsor then successfully offered a new Senate Substitute which made the following changes to the bill:

- Changed the title to Danny's Law;
- Adds a definition of former member; and,
- Provides further clarity to the offense of hazing by requiring someone to be knowingly, actively and not be under duress during the act.

Once modified, and with little further debate, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. On Thursday morning, the Senate revisited the bill again, and, with no further debate, Third Read and Passed the bill by a 32-1 vote.

### **Health Care Records**

The House Committee on Legislative Review convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 457](#), sponsored by Representative Tim Taylor (R-Bunceton). The bill requires records created by emergency care providers or telecommunicator first responders in the course of their duties be made available to those authorized to obtain patient health records. The bill does not limit the release of information regarding the general nature of the event that resulted in the request for assistance, as long as personal health information is redacted. Additionally, the bill does not limit the release of information to facilitate patient care. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Healthcare Prior Authorization**

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [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. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Hospital Association who stated prior authorization has become an advantageous tool for health insurers and many states are beginning to push back against prior authorization policies. It was also stated this would allow standardization of payors and payees and restore the balance between providers and health insurers. Additional supporting testimony was provided by several physicians and patients, including the Texas County Memorial Hospital, Cox Health, Missouri State Medical Association, MU Healthcare, Missouri Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Missouri Gastrological Society, Missouri Psychological

Association, Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Missouri Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, Golden Valley Memorial Hospital, Hannibal Regional Hospital, Missouri Pharmacy Association, National Association of Social Workers, Quest, Missouri Rural Health Centers, Mosaic Life Care, Missouri Ambulance Association, Mercy Health Systems, St. Luke's Health System and a private citizen. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Insurance Coalition who stated prior authorization is necessary to ensure medications and treatments are safe, adequate and cost effective. It was also stated the legislation is not necessary to enact "gold card" programs for providers as some insurance companies have already enacted these programs. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Missouri Health Plan Association, Americas Health Insurance Plans and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas City.

### **Hearing Aids/Cochlear Coverage**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 317](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). This is the Senate companion bill to [HB 177](#), sponsored by Representative Cameron Parker (R-Campbell) and requires MO HealthNet to cover the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants. The sponsor informed the committee a Senate Committee Substitute will be forthcoming which will contain several non-controversial health care provisions. Supporting testimony was presented by the Speech Language and Hearing Association who stated when the coverage of hearing devices was eliminated from Medicaid those with hearing loss suffered obstacles to obtaining affordable devices. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Cochlear Implant Alliance, Reach Foundation, Empower Missouri, Missouri Ambulance Association, the American College of Gynecologists and Obstetricians, American Center of Public Health Excellence, Centurion, Missouri Assisted Living Association, Haleon, Missouri Health Care Association and the Missouri State Medical Association.

### **Higher Ed Associations**

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 160](#), sponsored by Senator Brad Hudson (R-Cape Fair). The bill prohibits public institutions of higher learning from discriminating against religious, political, or ideological associations. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **Higher Education Modifications**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 606](#), sponsored by Representative Willard Haley (R-Eldon). The bill modifies provisions relating to the department of higher education and workforce development, Changes throughout the bill include changing the "Division of Workforce Development in the Department of Economic Development" to the "Office of Workforce Development in the Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development" to reflect the current governance. The bill also changes the currently named "Show-Me-Heroes" program to the "Missouri Heroes Connect". The bill repeals the following statutes relating to: The "Career Readiness Course Task Force", Graduate students teaching assignments, The "Missouri Guaranteed Student Loan Program" and the "Lender of Last Resort Revolving Fund", The "Vietnam Veteran's Survivor Grant", The "Marguerite Ross Barnett Competitiveness Scholarship Program", The pilot project "International Economic Development Exchange Program and the Advisory Council", Higher education faculty hiring practices, The "Advantage Missouri Program", The "Missouri Youth Service and Conservation Corps Act" and the "Youth Service and Conservation Corps Fund". During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was

adopted which restored the language for the “State Guaranty Student Loan Fund” as there are funds remaining in this program. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-0 vote.

### **Higher Education Transfer Act**

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 69](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Bonne Terre). The bill modifies provisions of the Higher Education Core Curriculum Transfer Act to reduce barriers for students transferring between institutions, especially transferring between community colleges and four-year institutions. The bill ensures that the credits earned in core curriculum courses count towards the degree requirements at receiving institutions in five specific areas. Those five specific areas are general business, elementary education and teaching, general psychology, registered nursing, general biology or biological science. The sponsor stated that by removing the need for students to repeat core curriculum courses when transferring the legislation supports timely degree completion, helping students save time and money, and their families to save money. Supporting testimony was presented by The Missouri Community College Association who stated this legislation seeks to solve the articulation system between community colleges and four-year institutions. Additionally, the credits are for the foundation classes for degrees and could potentially save students money as they work towards their final degree. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Ozark Technical Community College, St. Louis Community College, and Metropolitan Community College. Opposing testimony was presented by the Council on Public Higher Education opposed the bill and informed committee members that regional universities have long-term established articulation agreements with local or our nearby community colleges and expressed concern with establishing a common core curriculum for all universities in the State, within the five highlighted programs.

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 183](#), sponsored by Representative Cameron Parker (R-Campbell). This is the House companion bill to [SB 69](#), highlighted above. Committee discussion and testimony mirrored that of the Senate hearing with the exception of the University of Missouri System opposing the bill as their programs have expanded beyond the five core programs.

### **Incarcerating Reimbursement Act**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 723](#), sponsored by Representative Tara Peters (R-Rolla). The Missouri Incarceration Reimbursement Act is a statutory process which the State of Missouri may seek to recover up to 10% of the cost to house an offender for up to two years during the offender's stay in a Department of Corrections institution. The State may seize up to 90% of the value of an offender's assets in order to secure this reimbursement. The bill repeals the Act. Supporting testimony was presented by a civil rights attorney who stated this Act was established in the 80s and many of the statutes by which it was established have already been repealed and this is the final step for full removal. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Empower Missouri, Missouri Appleseed and a private citizen. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Injunctions**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Wednesday to discuss passage of [HB 839](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Schulte (R-New Bloomfield). The bill allows the Missouri Attorney General to appeal a preliminary injunction when the state is preliminarily prohibited from implementing, enforcing,

or otherwise effectuating any provision of the Missouri Constitution or of any Missouri statute or regulation. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to provide the authority to immediately file an appeal within 15 days and includes a filing process in the event there is an emergency. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-3 vote.

### **Insurance Data Security**

The House Committee on Insurance convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 436](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Hardwick (R-Dixon). The bill 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. The sponsor said that his bill is intended to standardize how an individual’s private information is protected. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Insurance Coalition who said that the insurance industry is generally in agreement with this legislation as it is model language first adopted in 2017 and has been passed by 26 states. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Association of Insurance Agents and Missouri Department of Commerce and Insurance. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **International Baccalaureate Exams**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 291](#), sponsored by Representative Kemp Strickler (R-Lee’s Summit) and [HB 1017](#), sponsored by Representative Chris Brown (R-Kansas City). The bills are identical and requires public community colleges, colleges, and universities to adopt a policy for undergraduate course credit for any student who receives a score of 4 or higher on an International Baccalaureate Exam. The sponsors expressed their desire to have the bill go Consent when the time comes to vote. Supporting testimony was presented by the Midwest International Baccalaureate World Schools Association who stated the IB curriculum is internationally recognized for its rigor and alignment with freshmen-level college coursework and similar legislation has already been enacted for AP coursework. Additional supporting testimony was provided by students, teachers, parents, COPHE, Académie Lafayette School District, Lee’s Summit High School and North Kansas City High School. Opposing testimony was presented by ArmorVine who stated these tests are sent overseas and is anti-American and anti-God.

### **Intimate Digital Depictions**

The House Crime and Public Safety Committee convened on Wednesday for a public hearing on [HB 362](#), sponsored by Representative Cecelia Williams (R-Dittmer). The bill allows individuals to bring a civil action if their intimate digital depiction is disclosed without consent and establishes criminal penalties for unauthorized disclosure. It also clarifies that consent to the creation of such material does not imply consent for its disclosure, specifies recoverable damages, and protects interactive computer service providers from liability when restricting access to unauthorized content. Supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Supporters emphasized that deepfake technology and synthetic media are increasingly used for abuse and exploitation, making legal updates necessary. She clarified that while Missouri already has a revenge porn law, this bill

specifically addresses AI-generated content and includes a good-faith disclosure provision for law enforcement-related situations. No opposing testimony was presented.

### **Land Banks**

The House Committee on Financial Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 717](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Falkner (R-St. Joseph). The bill modifies several provisions relating to land banks. Currently, members of a governing body and employees of a land bank agency and elected or appointed officials of a governing body, where the land bank agency is located are prohibited from purchasing property from a land bank. The bill repeals this provision. Additionally, the bill repeals the provision requiring property acquired through foreclosures or sheriffs' sale be adjacent to currently owned land bank property. Finally, the provisions repealed within the bill only pertain to St. Joseph Land Banks. The sponsor informed the committee a House Committee Substitute will be forthcoming to expand the legislation to additional political subdivisions and remove the language regarding the land bank boards. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **License Fee Offices**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [SB 3](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). The bill increases the fees on certain transactions and applies one dollar from every increased fee to the newly created "License Office Distribution Fund." Additionally, the bill specifies the Director of the Department of Revenue is prohibited from awarding fee office contracts to entities affiliated in any manner with a current employee of the Department or with a former employee of the Department for the one-year period following the employee's termination of employment. After a brief debate, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote.

### **License Plate Covers**

The House Transportation Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [HB 218](#) and [HB 1035](#), sponsored by Representatives Aaron Crossley (D-Independence) and Colin Wellenkamp (R-St. Charles). The bills aim to improve public safety by prohibiting license plate covers that obstruct visibility, which can hinder law enforcement efforts to track stolen vehicles and criminal activity. The legislation mandates that covers must be fully transparent, without tint or "flash glass" that distorts images. With Missouri ranked seventh in car theft and designated a high-intensity drug trafficking area, the bill supports law enforcement's use of automated license plate readers to combat vehicle theft, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. The sponsors indicate that the Missouri Highway Patrol is in favor of the bill. Local citizens provided supporting testimony while no opposing testimony was provided.

### **License To Teach Certificates**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 1153](#), sponsored by Representative Cecelie Williams (R-Dittmer). The bill allows the State Board of Education to issue a temporary Missouri teaching certificate to individuals certified by Teachers of Tomorrow, a for-profit organization providing alternative teaching credential programs. To qualify, an individual must hold a bachelor's degree in a field other than education and complete a self-paced 18-hour online training program and at least 60 hours of classroom instructional time. Supporting testimony was presented by Teachers of Tomorrow who stated the bill would help the state meet the state's significant teacher recruitment shortage and help retain graduating college students. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri NEA who stated the state already has alternative

pathways to teacher certification and should prioritize individuals with completed coursework in education, specifically in classroom management.

### **Local Employment Law Ordinances**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 443](#) sponsored by Representative Sherry Gallick (R-Belton). This bill prohibits political subdivisions from passing ordinances, policies or resolutions relating to certain employment laws. Supporting testimony was presented by the American Hotel and Lodging Association and U.S. Chamber of Commerce who said they have seen at least one attempt to do predictive scheduling in the St. Louis region. Work output issues have been popping up in other states, so they want to prevent it from happening in Missouri before it becomes a problem. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Hotel and Motel Lodging Association and the Missouri Restaurant Association. Opposing testimony was presented by Jobs with Justice Voter Action and informed the committee that many of the revisions in the bill are already law because former Representative Dan Shaul and former State Senator Mike Kehoe previously passed legislation addressing this situation when there was a problem within the City of St. Louis. He also told the committee that this could impact first responders.

### **Media Literacy & Online Conduct**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 116](#), sponsored by Representative Jim Murphy (R-St. Louis Co), which requires DESE to develop a two-year "media literacy and critical thinking" pilot program in five to seven school districts across the state beginning in the 2026-25 school year with the purpose of promoting student's ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and participate in all forms of media with an emphasis on appropriate online behavior. After a lengthy discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 17-1 vote.

### **Mental Health Courts**

The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 218](#), sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). The bill includes within treatment courts, a specific authorization for mental health courts. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

### **Motor Fuel Tax Modifications**

The House Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 572](#), sponsored by Representative Josh Hurlbert (R-Smithville). The bill requires internal and external expenditures be included in the MoDOT annual report. Additionally, for every year internal expenditures exceeds 18% of its total expenditures, the Motor Fuel Tax will be reduced by \$.01 per gallon the following fiscal year, but the tax may not be reduced more than \$.05 per gallon. Finally, in any fiscal year following a rate reduction, if the Department's internal expenditures are less than 18% of its total expenditures, the Motor Fuel Tax will be increased by \$.01 per gallon or up to the rate as of August 28, 2025, whichever is less, in the following fiscal year. The sponsor's intent with the legislation is to begin to rebuild trust with MoDOT and implement guardrails on how taxpayer dollars are spent. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which raised the cap on expenditures to 20% and reduces the penalty on the Motor Fuel Tax from \$.01 per gallon to \$.05 per gallon. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 12-2 vote.

## **Motor Vehicle Assessments**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 183](#), sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffalo). Currently, county assessors must use the October issue of the National Automobile Dealers' Association Official Used Care Guide to determine the true value of a motor vehicle. The bill repeals these provisions and requires the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) be used for all vehicles as acquired annually by the State Tax Commission for the original value in money of all motor vehicle assessment valuations.

Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri State Assessors' Association who stated having a guide that must be used in statute raises constitutionality questions and the price that must be paid for the named guide has almost doubled in price in the last four years. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Missouri Farm Bureau and Missouri Association of Counties. No opposing testimony was presented by the committee.

## **Motor Vehicle Inspections**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Wednesday to debate [HB 247](#), sponsored by Representative Bob Bromley (R-Carl Junction). The bill would allow drivers with a vehicle aged up to five years old be able to pay for vehicle registration up to five years. During bill progression, [HB 246](#), which allows individuals to obtain a two-year registration on their vehicle was added. Additionally, clarifying language was adopted which specified cars may be registered for six years or less. During debate, Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho) successfully amended the bill by adding [HB 799](#) which modifies when motor vehicles require inspections and establishes a Space Force license plate.

Representative Bruce Sassman (R-Bland) further amended the bill by adding [HB 61](#) which allows for the collection of a fee for the Heritage Conservation Foundation license plate. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote.

## **Motor Vehicle Licensing**

The House Committee on Transportation convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 775](#), sponsored by Representative Bob Bromley (R-Carl Junction). The bill modifies several provisions regarding motor vehicle licensing. Specifically, the bill sets a single fee for all non-commercial motor vehicles at \$25 and a registration fee for motorcycles, motor-tricycles, and autocycles at \$10 and this includes the railroad crossing safety fee. Additionally, the bill allows the Department of Revenue (DOR) to stagger the collection of alternative fuel decal fees and issuance of the decals and increases the renewal period for removable windshield disability placards from four years to eight years. Finally, the bill increases the number of vehicles a person can sell or display with the intent to sell without a license and removes an exemption for fees paid for the issuance of dealer plates or certificates of number from deposit in the "Motor Vehicle Commission Fund". Supporting testimony was presented by the Department of Revenue who stated this is their priority legislation this session and the fees collected would allow for a complete modernization of the outdated Cobalt system currently utilized by the department. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a state public advocate. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Motor Vehicle Tracking**

The House Transportation Committee convened Tuesday for a public hearing on [HB 293](#), [HB 971](#), and [HB 978](#), sponsored by Representatives Kemp Strickler, Cecily Williams, and Bill Irwin. These bills, while similar, differ slightly in requiring consent from all vehicle owners if multiple exist. The legislation seeks to make placing a tracking device on a vehicle without permission a Class B

misdemeanor, with discussions about increasing it to a Class A misdemeanor for stronger deterrence. Exceptions are provided for law enforcement with warrants, guardians tracking minors, companies tracking goods, lien holders, representatives of vulnerable individuals, rental car companies, private investigators with permission, and car manufacturers. Motivated by real-life cases of unauthorized tracking leading to serious crimes, the sponsors emphasized the need to prevent privacy invasions and expressed openness to modifications, including stronger penalties for repeat offenders. No supporting or opposing testimony was provided. The Missouri Insurance Coalition testified for informational purposes, stating the bill would not impact insurance companies or their driving programs.

### **Municipal Code Books**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 802](#) sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). Current law requires municipalities to have three printed copies of the municipal code available for inspection. Representative Mayhew's bill reduces the number of hard copies required to be available down to one if the municipality has their municipal codes online. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Municipal League and Municipal League of Metro St. Louis who said this modernizes the statute to reflect current technology. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Murder in the First Degree**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 225](#), sponsored Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). Currently, if a jury is unable to agree on the punishment for the offense of murder in the first degree, the court is to instruct the jury that the judge may decide upon a punishment of life imprisonment without eligibility for parole or a sentence of death. The bill repeals the provision that a judge may decide upon a punishment of death if the jury is unable to agree. Supporting testimony was presented by Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty who stated only Missouri and two other states do not require a unanimous decision by the jury for the death penalty. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Archdiocese of St. Louis Peace and Justice Commission, Missouri Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, Missouri Fellowship of Reconciliation and Empower Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Noninvasive Plants**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday to debate [SB 105](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). The bill will prohibit the Department of Agriculture from issuing and require suspension of any registration-inspection certificate of a nursery or nursery dealer if they knowingly or intentionally import exports, buys, sells, transports, distributes, or propagates a plant portion or seeds of a burning bush, callery pear, climbing euonymus, Japanese honeysuckle, or sericea lespedeza. During bill progression, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which added a descriptive list of included plants to clarify the invasive species. During debate, the sponsor successful offered a Senate Substitute which provided further descriptions of the invasive plants. Once modified, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. The bill was revisited on Thursday, and without further debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 32-1 vote.

### **Nontraditional Students**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 63](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill removes a requirement for parents to submit a declaration to homeschool to the county recorder or residing school district superintendent. Additionally,

the bill prohibits school districts from being members of statewide activities associations which prohibit virtual or home-school students from participating in any event or activities. Finally, the bill outlines how virtual instruction program or home-school students may participate in a resident district school-sponsored activity, athletic team, or extracurricular club or event. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

### **Nuclear Clean Power Act**

The House Committee on Utilities convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 50](#), sponsored by Representative Willard Haley (R-Eldon). The bill establishes the "Missouri Nuclear Clean Power Act" that allows Investor-owned Utilities (IOUs) to charge for costs associated with construction work in progress (CWIP) before the facility is operational. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to include clawback provisions. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 15-4 vote.

The committee then turned its attention to discuss passage of [HB 376](#), sponsored by Representative John Black (R-Marshfield). The bill is identical to [HB 50](#), highlighted above. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to change the title to Missouri First Natural Gas and Natural Power Act in order to add [HB 853](#), which allows CWIP for natural gas and also included clawback provisions. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 15-4 vote.

### **Office of the Public Counsel**

The House Committee on Utilities convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 748](#), sponsored by Representative Dean Van Schoiack (R-Savannah). Currently, the Office of Public Counsel is funded through General Revenue. The bill seeks to modify the funding mechanism by moving the Office of the Public Counsel funding to an assessment funding mechanism. During bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members that the Public Service Commission is currently funded through assessing utilities and his intent with the legislation is to align the Office of Public Counsel with the same funding mechanism. Supporting testimony was presented by the Office of Public Counsel and stated their department is the only one going through general revenue presently and every other division within the department is assessed, whether it's through insurance, through banking, the Public Service Commission, or through utilities. Informational testimony was presented by AT&T who informed committee members that telephone service was deregulated about 15 years ago and respectively requested to be removed from the bill. Additional informational testimony was provided by the Missouri Energy Development Association who stated that a framework is currently being negotiated as part of larger package and agrees that there is a need for the office to be under an assessment funding framework. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Opioid Alternatives**

The Senate Committee on Insurance and Banking convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [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. Supporting testimony was presented by the National Association of Social Workers, BJC, Gateway Foundation, PreventEd, Assisted Recovery Centers of America, Missouri Pharmacy Association, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists – Missouri Section, and a

private citizen who stated this would allow for the treatment of pain without the unwanted side effects opioids can produce for some patients. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Insurance Coalition, Americas Health Insurance Plans, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Kansas City who stated they do not believe there are physicians who are intentionally prescribing opioids to people with a known opioid addiction.

### **Parents' Bill of Rights**

The House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 744](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill requires school districts to post the salaries, compensation, and benefits of public-school districts on the Missouri Accountability Portal and requires school districts to provide parental access to review curriculum. Additionally, school districts are required to provide annual parental authorization for student participation in athletics, extracurricular, or classroom-related field trips, requires governing boards of school districts to provide a public comment period during public meetings and requires school districts to promptly notify families of an incident of criminal activity on a campus or building or threat to the safety of students. Finally, the bill outlines certain penalty provisions for a school district's failure to comply with provisions of the bill and prohibits a school district from compelling any school employee or student to adopt or affirm any theory, belief, or idea that an individual of any race, national origin, ethnicity, or color is inherently better than, less than, or responsible for actions committed in the past against any individual of an opposite race, national origin, ethnicity, or color. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri NEA who stated the unknown impacts of legislation of this type require caution before moving forward and there are other ways to promote positive parental engagement. Informational purposes was presented by the Missouri School Boards Association who stated there is already similar legislation in statute that does not include as many of the inflammatory provisions.

### **Park Ranger Vehicles**

The Senate Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety convened Monday afternoon for a public hearing on [SB 189](#), sponsored by Senator Justin Brown (R-Rolla). The bill adds vehicles operated by county or municipal park rangers to the definition of "emergency vehicle" applicable to yielding the right-of-way and the display of emergency lights. Supporting testimony was presented by the St. Louis County Parks and Recreation Department and the Missouri Parks and Recreation. Opposing testimony was presented by ArmorVine who stated this is this is an expansion of government powers.

### **Peer Review Committees**

The House Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 830](#), sponsored by Representative Bennie Cook (R-Houston). The bill would place licensed providers of emergency medical services under the provisions of the health care professionals' statutes for purposes of liability and other disclosures made by peer review committees. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 19-0 vote.

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

The House Committee on Insurance convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of four bills that seek to establish provisions relating to peer-to-peer car-sharing programs. In 2016, MO codified legislation to facilitate ride-share-programs such as Uber and Lyft, it also created a framework to clarify insurance coverage in the event a person takes their vehicle. However, new business models have

developed in the field that fall outside of our existing statutes, instead of ride sharing programs people can now also share their vehicles or engage in delivery services. MO statutes now require an update to include these new fields. Specifically, [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 discussion, 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. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 11-0 vote.

### **Personal Property Tax Elimination**

The House Special Committee on Tax Reform convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 988](#), sponsored by Representative Mark Matthiesen (R-O'Fallon). Currently, assessors annually assess all personal property at 33.3%. The bill seeks to phase down the 33.3% of assessed personal property taxes by 2% each year, until personal property assessed value is down to 10%. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-3 vote.

### **Pesticide Labeling**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [HB 544](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). The bill's language states a pesticide registered by certain federal agencies or a pesticide label consistent with federal pesticide labeling requirements shall satisfy any warning label requirement regarding cancer under any other provision of law. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. On Thursday, the bill was revisited and after considerable debate, was Third Read and Passed by a thin margin 85-72. 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 evening for a public hearing on [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. The sponsors stated PBM practices are directly impacting independent pharmacists and, in some cases, leading to closures and pharmacy deserts. Additionally, they stated the intent of the legislation is to allow patients to choose their own pharmacies, prevent PBMs from relabeling specialty and generic drugs and demands fiduciary responsibility of PBMs. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Primary Care Association who stated PBMs raise the price of drugs, harm patients and limit patient access. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Cox Health, BJC, Ranken, American Cancer Society Action Network, Missouri Hospital Association and a state public advocate. Opposing testimony was presented by the Pharmaceutical Care Management Association who stated this will impact private business contracts,

will raise drug prices, could increase healthcare premiums and noted that no one is required to utilize PBMs. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Missouri Insurance Coalition and Americas Health Insurance Plans.

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [SB 13](#), sponsored by Senator Justin Brown (R-Rolla). The bill includes both [HB 784](#), relating to 340B drugs, and [HB 982](#) highlighted above relating to PBM's. Additionally, the bill includes provisions that require a health carrier or PBM providing coverage for a reference product or a biological product that is biosimilar to the reference product shall provide coverage for the reference product and all biological products that have been deemed biosimilar to the reference product. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

### **Pregnancy Resource Centers**

The House Special Committee on Tax Reform convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 1176](#), sponsored by Representative Christopher Warwick (R-Bolivar). Currently, a taxpayer may be allowed a tax credit in an amount equal to 70% towards a contribution to a pregnancy resource center. Beginning January 1, 2026, the bill increases the credit to 100%. During committee discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to include diaper banks and maternity homes. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-2 vote.

### **Presidential Preference Primary**

The House Committee on Elections convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 126](#), sponsored by Representative Rudy Veit (R-Wardsville) and [HB 367](#), sponsored by Representative Bard Banderman (R-St. Claire). The bills are similar and reinstate the presidential preference primary election to be held statewide on the second Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each presidential election year. However, [HB 126](#) includes a provision which extends the no-excuse in-person absentee voting period from two weeks to six weeks prior to the date of the election. The sponsors stated a House Committee Substitute would be forthcoming to combine the two bills together and will be changing the date to the second Tuesday in March. Supporting testimony was presented by the Chairman of the Missouri Democratic Party who stated this is a bipartisan issue and not having a primary is causing some concerns among voters. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Republican Party, Health Forward Foundation of Kansas City, Secure Democracy USA and a state public advocate. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri Association of County Clerks and Election Authorities who stated moving the date up is helpful for administration purposes of the election as Missouri is only one of five states that hold April municipal elections. Additional informational testimony was provided by former Representative Dan Shaul. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Principal and Income Act**

The House Committee on Financial Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 608](#), sponsored by Representative Terry Thompson (R-Lexington). The bill makes a wide range of technical changes to the Principal & Income Act, to resemble the latest version of the Uniform Income & Principal Act, and establishes the Missouri Uniform Fiduciary Income and Principal Act (MUFIPA). The bill provides that the MUFIPA applies to a trust or estate and a life estate or other term interest in which the interest of one or more persons will be succeeded by the interest of one or more other persons,

except as otherwise provided in the terms of a trust or in MUFIPA. The MUFIPA also applies when Missouri is the principal place of administration of a trust or estate or the situs of property that is not held in a trust or estate and is subject to a life estate or other term interest. The bill also addresses fiduciaries' duties and actions. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Professional License Suspension**

The House Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 58](#), sponsored by Representative Bruce Sassmann (R-Bland). This bill provides that the Board of Therapeutic Massage ("Board") may apply to the Administrative Hearing Commission ("AHC") for an emergency suspension or restriction of a massage business or massage therapist license. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 19-0 vote.

The committee then turned its attention to discuss passage of [HB 766](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). Currently, someone who is professionally licensed by the Division of Professional Registration and is delinquent on their taxes, may have their license suspended. The bill repeals this provision. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 18-1 vote.

### **Professional License Reciprocity**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues and Professional Registration convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 61](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill provides that any person with at least 3 years of work experience in an occupation or profession in another state that does not use a license to regulate that occupation or profession may submit an application for licensure in Missouri. Additionally, the relevant oversight body shall require applicants to take a profession-specific exam. If a license is issued, it shall be a one-time, non-renewable temporary license for two years. Finally, upon the temporary license expiring, the person shall be required to apply for a permanent license. Supporting testimony was presented by FGA Action who stated this legislation removes barriers for both military members and those seeking to move to Missouri. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House Committee on Professional Registration and Licensing convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 946](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). 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 who stated they are excited for the expansion of the current program. Additional supporting testimony was provided by United WE and Missouri Fraternal Order of Police. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Property Assessment Limits**

The House Special Committee on Tax Reform convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 780](#), sponsored by Representative Darin Chappell (R-Rogersville). Effective January 1, 2026, the bill seeks to limit property assessment values by clarifying any person that purchases a home, the assessment value cannot be more than the purchase amount. The sponsor stated when the property sells, that would be what the new taxes will be based on and as long as a person owns the property, the taxes will not go up and his intent is to provide people the confidence their property won't be inflated and people will not be

taxed out of the home. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Association of Counties and stated that this has been done in California in the 1970's and that ended in lawsuits and advised the committee to take a holistic approach and evaluate all taxes and policies, instead of tackling various revenues. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development met Wednesday morning to discuss [SJR 50](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville). The resolution is the Senate companion to [HB 780](#), highlighted above. During bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members that resolution is a work in progress and he is working on clarifying language regarding requirements related to agriculture land and providing the ability to separate a plot of land and land with a house on it in order to provide a real true assessed valuation. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented.

### **Property Assessments Reductions**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 87](#), sponsored by Senator Joe Nicola (R-Grain Valley). The bill seeks to reduce the assessment rate by 2% across the board for all residential, agriculture, industrial and commercial property. During committee discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to remove reductions in the assessment rate for agricultural and commercial property and also phases in the reduction rate for residential property over a period of years. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-1 vote.

### **Property Clean Energy Act (PACE)**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1155](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Owen (R-Springfield). The bill revises the Property Assessment Clean Energy Act by making it inapplicable to residential property. The bill provides guidance for any residential properties approved for the program between January 1, 2022, and August 28, 2025.

Additionally, the bill allow dealers that originate these loans, to package the loans together and also take on loans from other states. Finally, the bill allows commercial PACE loans to be financed for up to thirty years. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Clean Energy District who stated the legislation is a great compromise which offers consumer protections. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Energy Initiative and Missouri Bankers Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Proposition A Modification**

The House Committee on Commerce convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 567](#), sponsored by Representative Sheri Gallick (R-Belton). This legislation is another avenue the General Assembly is pursuing to make changes to Proposition A which the voters approved by a statewide vote in November 2024. Specifically, the bill delays the effective date of implementing and earning paid accrued sick leave until January 1, 2026. The sponsor informed the committee a House Committee Substitute will be forthcoming which will allow individual businesses to have flexibility to tailor paid sick leave policies to meet their workforce needs. Additionally, the House Committee Substitute will delay the implementation of the minimum wage from 2024 to 2026 and remove the provision which ties the increase to the CPI. Opposition testimony was presented by Jobs with Justice who stated there was ample opportunity for businesses to register their concerns during the public comment period in the initiative petition process. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated businesses should be allowed to decide where they want to spend their money

and this helps restore some provisions to a free enterprise market. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Grocers Association, Missouri Forest Products Association and Missouri Restaurant Association.

The committee then turned its attention to the public hearing for [HB 555](#), sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis (R-Moberly). The bill is similar to [HB 567](#), highlighted above, except it also includes a provision which increases the public works project cost for prevailing wage rate compliance, from the current amount of \$75,000 to \$150,000, effective January 1, 2026. Opposing testimony was presented by the MidAmerica Carpenters Regional Council who stated in 2018 negotiations on Section 290 were put into place and this upsets the balance of those negotiations. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Protection of Children**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 170](#), sponsored by Senator Jamie Burger (R-Benton). This is the Senate companion bill for [HB 737](#), sponsored by Representative Melissa Schmidt (R-Eldridge) and 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. Supporting testimony was presented by Foster Adopt Connect who stated this legislation protects children leaving the foster care system. National Association of Social Workers, Kids Win Missouri and Missouri Coalition for Children. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The committee re-convened on Thursday morning to discuss passage of the bill. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Protection of Vulnerable Persons**

The House Committee on Financial Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 1049](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Owen (R-Springfield). This bill authorizes banks to offer a “trusted contact” program to customers who can designate one or more trusted contacts for the bank to contact in the event of an emergency, loss of contact with the customer or suspected third-party fraud activity or financial exploitation targeting the customer. Additionally, the bill states the bank is not liable for the actions of a trusted contact and neither is the bank liable for declining to interact with a trusted contact if the bank determines such trusted contact is not acting in the best interests of the customer. Finally, the bill allows a credit union to offer a trusted contact program to members similar to that offered by a bank. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

### **Public Employee Retirement**

The House Committee on Pensions convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 735](#), sponsored by Representative Dirk Deaton (R-Seneca) and [HB 686](#), sponsored by Representative Mike Steinmeyer (R-Sugar Creek). The bills are identical and provide a mechanism for the board of trustees of the Missouri State Employees' Retirement System to recover overpayments made to beneficiaries in error, either in a single sum or installments. Additionally, the bill prohibits contributions or expenditures by public pension systems to advocate, support or oppose the passage or defeat of any ballot measure or candidate. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted to combine the bills into one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

## **Taxes – Private Pension**

The House Committee on Pensions convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 44](#), sponsored by Representative Mike McGirl (R-Potosi). The bill increases an individual's income tax adjustments related to private pensions by increasing from \$32,000 to \$64,000 for married filing combined, \$25,000 to \$50,000 for single, and \$16,000 to \$32,600 for married filing single. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added [HB 426](#), which is similar to the title to create one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 15-0 vote.

## **Public Safety/STL Police Omnibus**

The House took up and dedicated floor time Tuesday to debate [HB 495](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis). The bill 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 specifies the number of commissioned officers that must be employed in St. Louis City and the makeup of the number of officers within that number. The bill also sets forth a formula for liability claims for 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, substitute language was adopted to mirror [SB 52](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon) which is the Senate companion.

Additionally, the substitute added the following provisions:

- If removed from office or resign 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; and,
- Modifies the makeup of the Board of Police Commissioners.

Representative LaKeySha Bosley (D-St. Louis) unsuccessfully attempted to further amend the bill by requiring the provision regarding local control of the St. Louis Police Department require a vote of the people before going into effect. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. On Thursday, the bill was revisited and after considerable debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 106-47 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

## **Reading Instruction Models**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 941](#), sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis (R-Moberly). The bill prohibits

school districts from utilizing methods of reading instruction which require the use of a primarily "three cueing" model known as meaning, structure and syntax, and visual cues. The bill sponsor said the bill does not prohibit the use of other methods as part of an overall approach to reading instruction, it only requires the school to utilize methods of instruction which provide an emphasis on phonics and phonemic instruction, comprehension, and modeling before three cueing. Supporting testimony was presented by Aligned who stated this model would help beginning readers and individuals with dyslexia learn to read and comprehend more than memorization of words. Additional supporting testimony was provided by a parent. Informational testimony was presented by DESE who stated 11,000 teachers have been trained in science of reading since the implementation of [SB 681](#) and they would like to continue with this initiative before attempting to implement new ones. Additional informational testimony was provided by the Missouri National Education Association.

### **Retail Theft**

The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 318](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (O'Fallon). The bill modifies provisions relating to offenses involving retail establishments. Specifically, the bill creates the offense of trespass in the third degree if a person enters a retailer with the purpose of disrupting commerce or causes danger to people or property. Additionally, a person is guilty of the offense of stealing if they steal property as part of an organized effort and the value is over \$10,000. Finally, the bill creates the offense of organized retail theft. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Retailers Association who stated retail theft is on the rise and the latest data indicates over \$141 million in sales tax and false refunds have been lost in Missouri. Additionally, the sale of stolen goods is not just happening on sites such as eBay but at local retailers who may not have the resources to prevent the resale of stolen goods. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Grocers Association, Missouri Tire Dealers Association, Wal-Mart, Inc., U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Missouri Prosecutors Association and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Informational testimony was presented by ArmorVine who stated while they support the concept of the bill but had concerns with the language regarding "threatening or adversely affecting the health and well-being of persons located around the retailer" as this was language used to force people to wear masks during COVID.

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

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 493](#), sponsored by Representative Dean Van Schoiack (R-Savannah). The bill would create 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. Certain titled items like motor vehicles, boats, trailers, and outboard motors are excluded from this exemption. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added [HB 635](#), sponsored by Representative Jeff Knight (R-Lebanon) to the title, as the bill is identical, to create one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-1 vote.

### **School and Student Safety**

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 68](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Henderson (R-Bonne Terre). The bill requires local educational agencies to report school safety incidents to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which requires local education agencies (LEA's) to report all safety incidents or threats to student safety to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE)

annually and requires DESE to produce a publicly searchable database of all safety threats. Additionally, the substitute prohibits the use of personal student cell phones and electronic communication devices during instructional activities and requires school districts to develop and publish disciplinary procedures and exceptions for students using electronic devices. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

### **School Bathrooms**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 212](#), sponsored by Senator Travis Fitzwater (R-Holts Summit). The bill seeks to clarify how school districts should address bathroom policies by clarifying all public school shower rooms, locker rooms, and restrooms accessible for use by multiple students shall be designated for and used by biological male or female students only. The bill also provides authority to ensure that there are spaces available to accommodate any student who asserts that his or her gender differs from his or her biological sex. Opposing testimony was presented by PROMO and highlighted the need to protect transgender Missourians and given the hyper-sexualization many people project on transgender people, there would be very obvious risks to their personal safety. Additional opposing testimony was provided by dozens of private citizens. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

### **School Cardiac ER Plans**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 155](#), sponsored by Senator Tracy McCreery (D-Olivette) and [SB 166](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bills are identical and require public schools to develop a cardiac emergency response plan. The sponsors stated sudden cardiac events is the leading cause of death for student-athletes and schools must be prepared. Supporting testimony was presented by the American Heart Association who stated having a plan in place is crucial to avoid confusion during a cardiac event. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, and St. Louis Children's Hospital, the National Football League, Smart Heart Sports Coalition, American Heart Association, Missouri State Medical Association, the Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Missouri NEA, and the Missouri Ambulance Association. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri School Boards Association who highlighted the need for resources to be provided to schools to make sure that schools are going to be able to implement cardiac emergency response plans. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House Committee on Health and Mental Health convened Tuesday evening for a public hearing on [HB 232](#), sponsored by Representative Sherri Gallick (R-Belton). The bill is the House companion to [SB 155](#) and [SB 166](#), highlighted above. Supporting testimony was presented by the American Heart Association who stated the majority of schools already have an AED machine but it does no good if it no one knows how to use and maintain it. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri State Medical Association, Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons, Missouri Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Kids Win Missouri, Children's Hospital of St. Louis, Missouri Nurses Association, Missouri Ambulance Association and Missouri College of Emergency Physicians. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **School Prohibitions**

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 115](#), sponsored by Senator Rick Brattin (R-Harrisonville). The bill prohibits school districts from teaching about the

1619 Project initiatives, critical race theory or any successor theory or concept, and any divisive concepts. Additionally, the bill established the Sunlight in Learning Act, which requires training, instructional, and curricular materials to be posted on a public school's or charter school's website. The bill also creates the Parents' Bill of Rights Act of 2025 and establishes the "Save Women's Sports Act" relating to female-only athletics in middle school, high schools, and colleges. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

### **School Safety Assessments**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 42](#), sponsored by Senator Angela Mosley (D-St. Louis). The bill requires the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) to conduct annual safety assessments of all public schools in the state in consultation with the Department of Public Safety and Missouri Center for Education Safety of each school's vulnerabilities to school shootings and intruders and provide recommendations on the implementation of appropriate safety procedures, policies, tools, and training protocols. After a brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

### **School Safety Omnibus**

The House Committee on Emerging Issues convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 416](#), sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). The bill modifies several provisions regarding safety within schools. Specifically, the bill requires school districts and charter schools to adopt a comprehensive emergency operations plan to address school safety, crises, and emergency operations. The bill establishes the "Stop the Bleed Act", defines a "bleeding control kit," requires DESE to develop a traumatic blood loss protocol for schools and requires that cardiopulmonary resuscitation training be required for school district and charter school employees. Additionally, the bill requires that school districts and charter schools equip each interior door with anti-intruder door locks and each exterior door with bullet-resistant window film. The bill also authorized districts and charter schools to enter into written agreements with law enforcement on procedures for reporting criminal offenses outlined in the bill and allows for certain offenses for students under 11 years of age to be reported to the Children's Division. Finally, the bill requires that beginning in the 2026-27 school year the Active Shooter and Intruder Response Training for Schools Program be required for teachers and school employees on an annual basis. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri School Board Association-Center for Education Safety who stated the threats students face are more substantive than ever before and this legislation is critical for student safety. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Missouri Sheriff's United and a teacher. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Secretary of State Fees**

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 770](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Banderman (R-St. Clair). Currently, numerous fees collected by the Secretary of State and credited to the Secretary of State's Technology Trust Fund are set to expire in 2026. The bill extends the date of expiration on these funds to 2030. During bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members that the fund was established in 1994, providing the Secretary of State's Office the ability to upgrade technology throughout the agency without using general revenue. Supporting testimony was presented by the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Sewage Disposal**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 200](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Falkner (R-St. Joseph). Currently, a state standard for the location, size of sewage tanks, and length of lateral lines is based partially on the percolation or permeability rate of the soil, as well as other specified factors. This bill modifies this provision to state that the standard is based partially on soil properties and also establishes the costs associated with testing. Additionally, the bill creates a mandatory registration program requiring continuing education for on-site wastewater treatment system professionals. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill Consent by 12-0 vote.

## **Sexual Offenses - Children**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [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. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Sheriff Duties**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SJR 40](#), sponsored by Senator Jill Carter (R-Granby). The amendment seeks to codify the statutory duties of the Office of Sheriff into the constitution. Additionally, the amendment allows the General Assembly to levy court costs to support salaries or benefits for sheriffs and retired sheriffs. Supporting testimony was presented by the Osage County Sheriff who stated other states have completely removed the Office of Sheriff in an attempt to save money and this would protect existing and future sheriffs. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Missouri Sheriffs United, Missouri Sheriff's Association and several county sheriffs. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Social Work Degree Programs**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 268](#), sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). Currently, an individual can become a social worker if he or she has received a baccalaureate or master's degree in social work. The social work programs must be accredited and approved by the Council on Social Work Education. This bill allows individuals to get a master's degree from a social work program in pre-candidacy for accreditation that is recognized and approved by the committee for social workers. The sponsor's intent with the legislation is to address the gap for students who have already graduated but cannot currently take their licensing exam. Supporting testimony was Dr. Gary Andrus from Missouri Western University who stated he is the director of the MSW program, and their students are supervised by licensed clinical social workers. Additionally, he informed the committee Missouri Western has been granted candidacy for the program and are seeking a path moving forward. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the field education director at Missouri Western who gave the committee an overview of the licensure process. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Solar Energy Systems**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 846](#), sponsored by Representative Melanie Stinnett (R-Springfield). In 2007, MO passed the Net Metering an

Easy Connect Act, which requires all utilities in Missouri to offer true net metering and free grid interconnection to any Missouri customer who has solar, wind, or a small hydroelectric system of less than 100 kw on their home or business. When a renewable energy system is connected to the grid, the customer receives full retail credit for their generation to offset their electricity bill. Any excess generation beyond their monthly usage is credited to the customer at a wholesale rate. The bill seeks to update current statute in order to streamline the process and increases the 100 kw to 1,000 kw. Opposing testimony was presented by Callaway Electric Cooperative who stated this seeks to further subsidize those with solar net metering, solar rarely provides any net benefit to utilities as a whole and it costs more to provide energy to those with solar than those without. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Association of Municipal Utilities, Community Association Institute, Missouri Association of Electric Cooperatives, Evergy, City Utilities of Springfield and Ameren Missouri. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Solar Energy Industry Association who stated this legislation is necessary to adapt to new technologies and provide additional options for power outside of regulated utilities. Additionally, those who wish to invest in solar deserve to do so outside of arbitrary HOA rules. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Azimuth Renewables.

### **St. Louis City Fire Retirement**

The House Committee on Pensions convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 205](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Hinman (R-O'Fallon). This bill relates to the administration of the two firefighter retirement systems serving firefighters in the City of St. Louis and would permit the two systems – the Firemen's Retirement System (FRS) and the Firefighters' Retirement Plan (FRP) – to be administered together, with the same Board of Trustees serving and investing the funds of both systems. Supporting testimony was presented by the St. Louis Firemen's Retirement System who stated having two retirement systems for one job classification has created problems for members of the systems and has often caused confusion when it comes to benefit disbursements. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Firefighters Local 73 and the Firefighters Council of St. Louis. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **State Department Mail**

The House Committee on Government Efficiency convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 520](#), sponsored by Representative Dave Griffith (R-Jefferson City). Currently, a notice of deficiency from the Department of Revenue must be sent by certified mail. The bill would remove that requirement for commercial entities and allow notice to be sent by electronic means. For individuals, they may opt-in to receive notification electronically or by first class mail. Supporting testimony was presented by the Department of Revenue who stated with the increase in postage this would allow for cost savings and the postal service is not always the most reliable. Opposing testimony was presented by a state public advocate.

### **State Rule & Regulatory Review**

The Senate Committee on Government Efficiency convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 221](#), sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon). The bill modifies the standard for review for a state agency's interpretation of statutes, rules, regulations, and other subregulatory documents. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-1 vote.

### **Statute of Limitations**

The House took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [HB 68](#), sponsored by Representative Matthew Overcast (R-Ava). The bill amends the law by requiring an injured party to act within two

years of an injury instead of 5 years for personal and bodily injury. During debate, Representative Brian Seitz (R-Branson) successfully amended the title to Statute of Limitations in order to successfully place an amendment which removes the statute of limitations for adult victims of childhood sexual abuse. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by a voice vote. On Thursday, the bill was revisited and after considerable debate, was Third Read and Passed by a 92-42 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

### **STEM Career Awareness**

The House Committee on Higher Education and Workforce Development convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [HB 33](#), sponsored by Representative Bishop Davidson (R-Republic). The bill mandates DESE establish the “STEM Career Awareness Activity Program” for grades 9-12 and begin promoting the program in the 2026-27 school year. Additionally, the bill allows DESE to choose a third-party nonprofit entity to implement the program, solicit proposals and select a provider. Finally, the bill creates the “STEM Career Awareness Activity Fund” and is subject to appropriation. The sponsor’s intent with the legislation is to increase the likelihood that students have a well-rounded STEM education. Supporting testimony was presented by Ascend Learning who stated early and continued exposure to STEM programs are critical to continue to expand the science and research fields.

Additional supporting testimony was presented by Next Missouri, students and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Student Athlete Compensation**

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 80](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill extends eligibility for a high school student athlete to earn compensation for the use of the Name, Image, or Likeness, if they have signed a letter of intent with an accredited university or college and intend to participate in athletics sponsored by the signing institution. Additionally, the bill allows student athletes who attend public schools in the state to use their image or likeness as identified by the high school they attend for the purpose of negotiating compensation with a college or university. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to prohibit the usage of a school's logo to prevent potential misuse or being utilized in advertising. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.

### **Student Surveys**

The Senate Committee on Government Efficiency convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 223](#), sponsored by Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). The bill requires any school which receives state funding to provide 24-hour notification of any student surveys. Additionally, the school is required to notify the parent of such surveys, disclose the full content of the survey and obtain written consent if the survey asks any questions relating to items protected under the federal Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-1 vote.

### **Sunshine Law**

The House Legislative Review Committee convened Thursday morning to discuss passage of [HB 1063](#), also sponsored by Representative Bruce Sassman (R-Bland). The bill adds to the list of records that are exempt from disclosure under the Sunshine law by allowing records showing boundaries and ownership of property where species of conservation concern and natural communities are located and administered by the Department of Conservation to be closed. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added clarifying language to ensure plant or animal species

considered endangered, threatened, critically impaired, and/or vulnerable may still be reported and examined. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-0 vote.

### **Tax Credit – Agriculture**

The Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food Production, and Outdoor Resources convened Thursday morning for a public hearing on [SB 466](#), sponsored by Senator Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill seeks to eliminate the sunset for several agriculture tax credits that are set to expire December 31, 2028. Specifically, the bill eliminates the sunsets on the wood energy tax credit; meat processing facilities tax credit; higher ethanol fuel tax credit; biodiesel retail sale tax credit; urban farms tax credit; rolling stock tax credit; agriculture production tax credits; and specialty agricultural crops tax credit. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Corn Growers Association, Missouri Farm Bureau, Missouri Renewable Fuels Association, Missouri Cattlemen's Association, Railway Supply Institute, Missouri Forest Product Association, Missouri Soybean Association, Missouri AgriBusiness Association, and Associated Industries of Missouri and highlighted they are working with the sponsor to provide technical corrections to ensure off road diesel qualifies for programs such as the Ethanol Retailers Incentive Tax Credit as well as the New Gen Cooperative Incentive Tax Credit. Informational testimony was presented by the Missouri Department of Agriculture to address any questions the committee might have about any of the programs. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

Immediately after the hearing, the committee discussed passage of [SB 466](#). During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to provide a technical fix to ensure off road diesel qualifies for the fuel programs. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

The committee then turned its attention to discuss passage of [SB 30](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Bean (R-Holcomb). The bill is similar to [SB 466](#), highlighted above, and seeks to extend all of the sunset dates to December 31, 2031. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to eliminate the sunsets and align the bill with the changes in [SB 466](#). Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

### **Tax Credit – Circuit Breaker**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 64](#) and [SB 101](#), sponsored by Senators Tracy McCreery (D-Olivette) and Mike Cierpiot (R-Lees Summit). The bills are similar and seeks to adjusts the “circuit breaker” tax credit annually to account for inflation. Supporting testimony was presented by AARP, Missouri Budget Project, Empower Missouri, Health Forward Foundation of KC, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of St. Louis, and the Missouri Association of Area Agencies on Aging and stated that the bill provides immediate tax relief for seniors. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit – Engineering Degree**

The Senate Committee on Emerging Issues convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 190](#), sponsored by Senator Justin Brown (R-Rolla). Beginning on or after January 1, 2025, the bill seeks to create three tax credits for certain employers and employees with engineering degrees. The first allows a qualified employer that reimburses tuition to a qualified worker, equal to 50% of tuition reimbursed and claimed the first four years of employment. The second allows a qualified employer that pays compensation to a qualified employee for the first 5 years, equal to 10% compensation not to exceed \$75,000. The third tax credit is provided to a taxpayer that becomes a qualified employee, in the amount

equal to \$5,000 and can be claimed for 5 consecutive years up to \$25,000 in tax credits. The bill includes a sunset on December 31, 2030, unless reauthorized by the General Assembly. The sponsor's intent is to incentivize engineers to stay or relocate to Missouri. Supporting testimony was presented by the American Council of Engineering Companies who stated this legislation would give engineering firms additional tools to recruit and train engineers to meet the demand for Missouri's economy and the demand for engineers is expected to grow exponentially in the next ten years compared to average occupations. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Associated Industries of Missouri, Boeing Company, Metropolitan St. Louis Sewer District and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit - Private/Home School**

The Senate Committee on Education convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 195](#) and [SB 53](#), sponsored by Senators Rick Brattin (Harrisonville) and Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon), respectively. The bills are identical and authorizes a tax credit equal to one hundred percent of qualified expenses incurred during the tax year for educating a qualified student in a private school or home school. Opposing testimony was presented by the Family Covenant Ministries and stated that the current Missouri home education statute is by far the best home education statute in the United States as it gives maximum flexibility without governmental intrusion into their ability as parents to home school their kids and advocated that the statutes should not change and for homeschooled students to be removed from the provisions of the bill. Additional opposing testimony was provided by the Missouri NEA and the Missouri School Boards Association. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit - Railroad Expenses**

The House Committee on Economic Development convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 669](#), sponsored by Representative Dane Diehl (R-Butler). The bill seeks to incentivize short line 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. The sponsor noted 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 and Northern Arkansas Shortline Railroad and informed committee members that major railroads used 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 presented by Mickelson and Co., Missouri Economic Development Council, Missouri Railroad Association, and Port KC. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credit – Sporting Events**

The House Special Committee on Tourism convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 501](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis). This bill provides a tax credit to nonprofit organizations, described as "certified sponsors," that are active members of the Sports Events and Tourism Association. Additionally, the bill raises the cap on the tax credits from the Department of Economic Development to \$6 million from \$3 million. Finally, the bill raises the cap for events located in Jackson County, St. Louis County or St. Louis City to \$5.5 million from \$2.7 million and extends the sunset for both credits to 2031. The sponsor informed the committee that \$500,000 from the raising of the cap on the first tax credit will be dedicated to communities holding events outside of St. Louis and Kansas City. Supporting testimony was presented by the St. Louis Sports Commission who stated major sporting events generate significant visitor spending and tax revenue to the state and is a critical tool.

Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Greater St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau, Kansas City Sports Commission, City of Kansas City, Visit KC, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Missouri Association of Convention and Visitor Bureaus and the Branson Lakes Area Chamber of Commerce. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Tax Credits - Over Claimed**

The House Ways and Means Committee convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 326](#), sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). Currently, when all claims against benevolent tax credits and the Champion for Children Tax Credit are finalized and all tax credits are claimed, if the credits needed to be apportioned, the tax credits are apportioned among all individuals that claim them and those that owe taxes receive a notice from the state of Missouri that you owe your taxes plus interest and penalties. The bill seeks to clarify when all tax credits are claimed and they're apportioned among everyone, the taxpayer has 60 days to pay the taxes that they owe when they get the notice in July, without any penalties or interest. During committee discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clarified. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-1 vote.

### **Tax Exemption – Broadband Equipment**

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy, and the Environment convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 185](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). For all tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2026, the bill authorizes a state and local sales tax exemption for machinery and equipment used to provide broadband communications service by a broadband communications service provider. The bill sponsor stated the bill would align broadband and telecommunications equipment sales policy as telecommunications equipment is currently exempted from sales tax and often those lines are blurred. Supporting testimony was presented by Missouri Internet and Television Association and stated the bill helps provide a solution to close the digital divide. Additional supporting testimony was provided by AT&T, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Broadband Providers, the Health Forward Foundation of KC, Missouri Electric Co-ops, and the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

The House Special Committee on Tax Reform met Tuesday afternoon to consider passage of [HB 743](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill is the House companion to [SB 185](#), highlighted above. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by 9-0 vote.

### **Tax Rate Ceilings**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 783](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). Currently, political subdivisions are allowed to impose a tax rate lower than its tax rate ceiling. The governing body may, in a non-reassessment year, increase the lowered tax rate without voter approval, so long as the increased rate does not exceed the tax rate ceiling. The bill clarifies current law by stating that reductions to the tax rate ceiling in a non-reassessment year will be applied in the year immediately following the general assessment. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Taxes – Business License**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time on Tuesday to debate [SB 145](#), sponsored by Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). Currently, cities may impose a business license tax on businesses. The

bill restricts cities from imposing a business license tax on businesses which earns \$10,000 or less in gross receipts from sales in any calendar year. Additionally, currently a person is defined as not engaging in business in Missouri for the purpose of collecting sales tax if they do not accrue more than \$3,000 in gross receipts in any calendar year. The bill would increase the threshold to \$10,000 in any calendar year. During debate, the sponsor offered a Senate Substitute which changed the title to “Licensure of Certain Businesses” and carved out Kansas City. Senator Karla May (R-St. Louis) unsuccessfully attempted to amend the bill further by also carving out St. Louis but was defeated by voice vote. After considerable debate the bill was ultimately returned to the calendar for further debate another day. On Wednesday the Senate revisited the bill. The sponsor withdrew her original substitute and successfully offered a new Senate Substitute which eliminates the under \$10,000 threshold for collection of sales tax receipts in any calendar year from the bill. After no further debate, the bill was Perfected by voice vote. On Thursday morning the Senate revisited the bill once again and with no further debate, Third Read and Passed the bill by a 33-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

### **Taxes – Estates and Trusts**

The House Committee on Children and Families convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [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. Supporting testimony was presented by Paul Vogel, an estate and trust attorney from St. Louis who informed the committee on the history of how estates and trusts have been taxed in this state and that it was never intended for Missouri to be more favorable toward nonresidents than residents when it comes to taxation. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Taxes – Income**

The Senate Committee on Economic and Workforce Development convened Wednesday morning to consider passage of [SJR 31](#), [SJR 20](#), [SJR 24](#), [SJR 42](#), [SJR 32](#), and [SJR 48](#) sponsored by Senators Ben Brown (R-Washington), Curtis Trent (R-Springfield), Nick Schroer (R-O’Fallon), Jill Carter (R-Granby), Brad Hudson (R-Cape Fair), and Adam Schnelting (R-St. Charles) respectively. Upon voter approval, the resolutions place spending caps on the General Assembly’s appropriation authority, create the Tax Reform Fund for any surplus revenue collections, repeal the prohibition on sales and use tax expansions, eliminate the MO income tax and personal capital gains taxes immediately, and impose a state sales tax on services of 6%. During committee discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to combine all six resolutions into one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the resolution by a 5-2 vote.

The committee then turned its attention to discuss passage of [SB 151](#), [SB 138](#), [SB 220](#), [SB 228](#), [SB 161](#), also sponsored by Senators Ben Brown, Curtis Trent, Nick Schroer, Jill Carter, and Brad Hudson. Beginning January 1, 2026, a flat rate of 4% personal income tax is imposed on the income of every Missouri resident. The intent of the measure is to statutorily implement provisions proposed in [SJR 31](#), [SJR 20](#), [SJR 24](#), [SJR 42](#), [SJR 32](#), and [SJR 48](#), highlighted above. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted to combine all five bills into one legislative vehicle. Additionally, the Senate Committee Substitute added SB 146 which eliminates the individual income tax into the bill. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

Finally, the committee convened a public hearing for [SB 146](#), sponsored by Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). The bill seeks to eliminate the MO individual income tax. During bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members that she plans to offer a committee substitute to align the bill with [SB 151](#), highlighted above. Supporting testimony was presented by Associated Industries of Missouri. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Budget Project and noted that there is no offset for the revenues.

### **Taxes – Real and Personal Property**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [HB 388](#) sponsored by Representative Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton). This legislation would allow township counties to pass an ordinance allowing taxpayers to pay their real and personal property taxes on an annual, semi-annual or quarterly basis. The sponsor said that larger counties have more flexibility in how they allow people to pay their taxes and township counties would like the same ability. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri County Collector's Association who noted there are 22 township counties in the state. This legislation seeks to allow people in those counties to talk with their Collector about a budgeted plan if they have trouble paying their taxes. Supporting testimony was also provided by the Missouri Association of Counties. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Taxes – Short-Term Rentals**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening for a public hearing on [HB 1086](#), sponsored by Representative Chris Brown (R-Kansas City). The bill seeks to simplify taxing on short-term rentals. The bill requires that when a single-family home is leased, in whole or in part, for 30 consecutive days or less, such a home will not be considered "transient housing". The sponsor's intent with the legislation is to ensure consistency across the state with short-term rentals by ensuring assessors may not modify residential properties to commercial properties. Supporting testimony was presented several vacation rental property owners who stated five counties have changed the assessment of their properties to commercial and it has negatively impacted their financial stability. Opposing testimony was presented by the Missouri Hotel Lodging Association who stated if you own a property that you collect sales tax on for rental purposes it is now a commercial property and statewide policies should not favor one industry over another.

### **Teacher Externships**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 267](#), sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). The bill reauthorizes an expired program allowing teachers to gain practical experience in business and fields outside of teaching as part of a graduate-level salary schedule, with the supervision and approval of their local school district. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry who stated externships provide a way for businesses and the education communities to collaborate and exchange relevant information on the types of skills that are needed to be competitive in today's job climate. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Aligned, Missouri School Boards Association, Kansas City Public Schools, Missouri NEA, and Missouri State Teachers Association. Informational testimony was presented by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education who provided background information on the program to the committee. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Teacher Salaries**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 368](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Banderman (R-St. Clair). The bill clarifies state law to allow school districts participating in the small schools' grant program to count virtual instruction days or instructional days scheduled but interrupted by inclement weather as part of their school day minimum of 169 days in order to continue qualifying for the small schools grant program to meet the state's minimum teacher salary. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Council of School Administrators who stated this would help small and rural schools continue to recruit and retain teachers without a fiscal impact from inclement weather limiting their ability to pay the minimum teacher salary. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri State Teachers Association, Missouri NEA, and Missouri School Boards Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Time-Limited Settlement Demands**

The House Committee on Commerce convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 437](#), sponsored by Representative Bill Hardwick (R-Dixon). The bill replaces the term "time-limited demand" with "settlement demand". The bill specifies that, in any lawsuit alleging damages outside of the norm of the contracted insurer, any prior settlement demand to settle a claim will not be considered to have been a reasonable opportunity to settle the claim unless the demand was made in writing, was sent certified mail, or remained open for acceptance by the liability insurer for at least 90 days from the date the demand was received by the insurer. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-1 vote.

## **Tobacco Product Regulations**

The House Committee on Commerce convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 344](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). 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 of the state regulating the sale of tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or vapor products. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which enacts a statewide standard raising the age for selling and consuming tobacco products from 18 to 21, also known as Tobacco 21, and still allows local ordinances to be enforced which match state standards. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by an 8-2 vote.

## **Trespass**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday morning to discuss passage of [SB 168](#), sponsored by Senator Jamie Burger (R-Benton). The bill modifies provisions relating to the removal of persons unlawfully occupying property with a residential dwelling through ex parte orders. Additionally, a violation of an ex parte order for removal of persons unlawfully occupying property covered by this act shall be a class E felony, instead of class A misdemeanor. During discussion, a Senate Committee Substitute was adopted which also applies such provisions to property containing a commercial vacant building or property exclusively consisting of vacant land. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 3-2 vote.

## **Uniform Fiduciary Income and Principal Act**

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [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. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Bar-Probate and Trust Committee who stated it is critical this is updated as many assets listed currently are obsolete and planning protocols are not in place for many current common assets. Additional supporting testimony was provided by the Missouri Credit Union Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Utilities Condemnation of Land**

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy, and the Environment convened Tuesday morning for a public hearing on [SB 199](#), sponsored by Senator Jason Bean (R-Holcomb). The bill prohibits the use of eminent domain by electrical corporations for the construction or erection of any plant, tower, panel, or facility used for wind and solar farms that are owned by public utilities. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Farm Bureau who expressed concern about property rights and the use of eminent domain and informed committee members that the state is seeing a huge influx of commercial wind and solar projects. Additional supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Corn Growers Association, Missouri Soybean Association, and several private citizens. Informational testimony was presented by Ameren Missouri who informed committee members that Ameren does not use eminent domain for their wind or solar projects, but would like an exemption for their grid connector lines.

### **Utilities Relocation**

The House Committee on Transportation convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 661](#), sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). Under this legislation, municipalities and the Missouri Department of Transportation would be required to reimburse non-regulated utilities for the costs associated with relocating their infrastructure from the public right of way. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which clarifies the language and sectional references for small broadband providers. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 15-1 vote.

### **Utility Eminent Domain**

The House Committee on Rural Community Development convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 475](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Pollitt (R-Sedalia). The bill prohibits the use of eminent domain by electrical corporations for the construction or erection of any plant, tower, panel, or facility used for wind and solar farms that are owned by public utilities. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-4 vote.

### **Utility Omnibus**

The Senate took up and dedicated floor time Wednesday to revisit [SB 4](#), sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill reclassifies the pipelines in Missouri which transport liquids and gases 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 debate, the sponsor withdrew his original Senate Substitute. He successfully offered a new Senate Substitute which made the following changes:

- 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.

Once modified, and with considerable more debate, the Senate provided the first of two necessary approval votes and Perfected the bill by voice vote.

### **Utility Pipeline Depreciation**

The House Committee on Ways and Means convened Monday evening to discuss passage of [HB 531](#), sponsored by Representative Wendy Hausman (R-St. Peters). Under this proposal, current law on depreciable tangible personal property will apply, beginning January 1, 2026, to all real property that is in service at any time, is stationary, and used for the purpose of transporting or storage of liquid and gaseous products like water, sewage and natural gas that is not propane or LP gas and does not include petroleum products. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which requires any ballot measure that seeks approval to add, change or modify a tax on real property use language to express the effect of the proposed change in terms of real dollars owed per \$100,000 rather than \$100. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-2 vote.

### **Virtual Education Assessments**

The House Committee on Elementary & Secondary Education convened Wednesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 220](#), sponsored by Representative Ed Lewis (R-Moberly). The bill allows any virtual school provider participating in the Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program to administer statewide assessments virtually under the supervision of a video proctor of no more than ten

students to each proctor. Additionally, the bill removes nonresident students participating in virtual course programs administered by a school district from the district's enrollment calculation if the district has fewer than 350 students in total. Supporting testimony was presented by the National Coalition for Public School Options, Accel Schools, and Pearson Education who stated the legislation helps reduce costs to the provider and increases access to students with special needs. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Volunteer Fire Fighters - TTD**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [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 volunteers 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.

### **Voter Registrations**

The Senate Committee on Local Government, Elections and Pensions convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [SB 62](#), sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill modifies provisions regarding voter registrations and election law violations. Specifically, the bill requires documentary proof of United States citizenship in order to register to vote and requires the individual providing this information to do so in person. Additionally, the bill requires the Secretary of State and local election authorities to perform quarterly system maintenance rather than on a regular basis. Finally, currently if the SOS finds that reasonable grounds appear that the alleged election offense was committed, the SOS may issue a probable cause statement and refer the offense to the appropriate prosecuting attorney. The bill allows referrals to the Attorney General instead. During discussion, substitute language was adopted which excluded those already registered to vote from having to prove citizenship and clarifies that referrals of election offenses may still be made to the appropriate prosecuting attorney. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

### **Vulnerable Persons Omnibus**

The House Committee on Corrections and Public Institutions convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 916](#), sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins (R-Bowling Green). The bill modifies several provisions pertaining to vulnerable persons. Specifically, the bill addresses incarcerated offenders accessing SNAP benefits, releasing of inmates from the Department of Corrections' procedures, raising the age from 14 to 18 on statement admissibility, procedures for pregnant inmates and admissibility of certain evidence in criminal cases. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was adopted which added compromise language on the shackling provision and added a provision allowing certain offenders committed to the Department of Corrections to earn good-time credits. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

### **Water Supply Districts Dissolution**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to discuss passage of [HB 923](#), sponsored by Representative Bob Bromley (R-Carl Junction). Currently, a decree of dissolution to dissolve a public water supply district must be passed a majority of two-thirds of the voters in the district. The bill reduces the percentage to four-sevenths of the voters in the district. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 11-1 vote.

## **Work Requirements**

The Senate Committee on Families, Seniors and Health convened Wednesday morning for a public hearing on [SJR 43](#), sponsored by Senator Jill Carter (R-Granby). The constitutional amendment, upon approval by the voters and with a federal waiver, would require able-bodied adult MO HealthNet participants, ages 19 to 49, to participate in work and community engagement requirements. The amendment allows MO HealthNet to grant certain exemptions to those who are disabled and outlines specific criteria that must be met to qualify for other exemptions. Opposing testimony was presented by the American Cancer Society Action Network who stated consistent access to screening and treatment are necessary and placing limitations on these things are dangerous for patients. Additional opposing testimony was provided by Empower Missouri, Missouri Budget Project, Catholic Charities and Missouri Family Health Council. Informational testimony was presented by the Department of Social Services who answered questions regarding lawsuits for call center wait times. No supporting testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Workers' Compensation – First Responders**

The House Committee on Local Government convened Wednesday morning to hear testimony on [HB 72](#) sponsored by Representative Tim Taylor (R-Bunceton). The bill sets forth the basis for determining the compensation rate for volunteer firefighters and volunteer emergency services responders. The sponsor said this bill seeks to correct an anomaly in the system that forces some volunteer fire fighters and emergency services providers to earn \$40/week (if injured on the job) while they try to get back to full-time employment. The bill creates a methodology for their compensation rate based on a more realistic number than \$40/week. Committee members question where the money to cover the extra coverage will come from, but no funding source was offered. Supporting testimony was presented by Kyle Marquart who said he previously carried this bill as well when he was in the Legislature. He believes this bill is needed because we have approximately 22,000 volunteer fire fighters in the state and 13,000 are volunteer firefighters. Informational testimony was presented by MIRMA, which provides risk coverage to 101 cities across the state and said that they do not pay based on the \$40/week rate. Instead, they look for a local, comparable volunteer fire fighter wage and base the volunteer workers' compensation rate on that wage. They believe this is a tested mechanism that has worked and would recommend the legislature look at doing something similar. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

## **Workers' Compensation Claims**

The House Committee on Insurance Committee convened Monday afternoon to discuss passage of [HB 497](#), sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St. Louis). The bill seeks to modify several provisions relating to workers' compensation. Specifically, the bill seeks to clarify the prevailing factors standards, to ensure injuries, medical conditions, and disabilities, and the need for treatment are truly the result of a workplace accident and not preexisting conditions that may have been exacerbated. Additionally, the bill adjusts how insurance savings are considered in awards, to prevent situations where employees receive compensation for medical expenses that were already covered by other sources. The bill also creates an early motion to dismiss mechanism for cases that are fundamentally deficient such as those filed untimely, an employee was intoxicated, or the accident did not occur during the course of employment. Finally, the bill allows for appeals of temporary awards and eliminates the penalty that employers have to pay in the event they appeal the decision. During discussion, a House Committee Substitute was

adopted which adds additional mechanisms for dismissals and removes the requirement that every dismissal have a full hearing. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote.

### **Workers' Compensation Judges**

The House Committee on Judiciary convened Tuesday afternoon for a public hearing on [HB 123](#), sponsored by Representative Rudy Veit (R-Wardsville). The bill amends the way an administrative law judge can be removed and provides that the compensation for Administrative Law Judges and chief administrative law judges will be determined solely by the rate outlined in law and will not increase when pay raises for executive employees are appropriated. Supporting testimony was presented by the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Additional supporting testimony was provided by Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Active and Retired Missouri State Employees Association. No opposing testimony was presented to the committee.

### **Bills of interest to you:**

*(Insert bills or links here)*

### **Hearing Schedules:**

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

### **Calendars:**

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

### **Key Upcoming Dates:**

- February 26, 2025 – State of the Judiciary 10:30am – House Chamber
- March 1, 2025 – Last day to introduce legislation
- 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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