



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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A NEW CHANGE IN THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

In recent years, a bill passed out of committee was referred to the House Rules Committee for future consideration. This committee could consider a bill to be presented to the floor of the House for debate.

The House Rules Committee has been replaced by many Select Committees for various standing committees. For example, bills coming out of the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee, the Higher Education Committee, and the Emerging Issues Committee will be assigned to the Select Committee on Education. This committee will decide the merits of bringing bills to a full House for debate.

The purpose of these Select Committees is to move legislative issues forward in a timely support manner.

Select Standing Committee chair appointments for this session include:

- Select Standing Committee on Agriculture- Rep. Bill Reiboldt, R-Neosho
- Select Standing Committee on Budget- Rep. Tom Flanigan, R-Carthage
- Select Standing Committee on Commerce- Rep. Anne Zerr, R-St. Charles
- Select Standing Committee on Education- Rep. Mike Lair, R-Chillicothe
- Select Standing Committee on Financial Institutions and Taxation- Rep. Tony Dugger, R-Hartville
- Select Standing Committee on General Laws- Rep. Caleb Jones, R-Columbia
- Select Standing Committee on Insurance- Rep. Don Gosen, R-Ballwin
- Select Standing Committee on Judiciary- Rep. Kevin Austin, R-Springfield
- Select Standing Committee on Labor and Industrial Relations- Rep. Holly Rehder, R-Sikeston
- Select Standing Committee on Rules- Rep. Kevin Engler, R-Farmington
- Select Standing Committee on Social Services- Rep. Sue Allen, R-Town and Country
- Select Standing Committee on State and Local Governments- Rep. Sheila Solon, R-Blue Springs
- Select Standing Committee on Utilities- Rep. T.J. Berry, R-Kearney

Electoral Process- Kathleen Farrell and Linda McDaniel, Directors and Public Advocacy for Voter Protection (PAVP) Chairs

PHOTO ID

On January 27, 2015 LWV members, Marty Ott, Elaine Blodgett, Marilyn McLeod, Carol Schreiber, and Nancy Copenhaver attended the House Election Committee hearing on the Voter Photo ID bills, **HB 30** (Dugger) and **HJR 1** (Dugger). Nancy and Marilyn testified against the bills.

The House Elections Committee met on February 3 and approved the two measures regarding voter ID requirements. The House Select Committee on State and Local Governments approved both measures on February 5, and both proposals can now be placed on the House Calendar for floor debate. These related measures are implementing bills that would require government photo ID for voting. The League opposes this requirement.

Please watch for an action alert.

Health Care – Barbara Davis, Director and Health Care Chair

This session the Missouri House of Representatives is doing some of their business differently than in recent years. This week, January 9-13, 2015, all of the House appropriations committees are having hearings to ascertain what the budget needs are. Most, and maybe all, of the appropriations committees will be hearing testimony from state agencies about their budgetary needs.

I submitted written testimony on behalf of LWVMO requesting that funding which was cut last session, either by legislative action or veto by the governor, be restored this year. Please read the testimony for specific details. I am also following other health topics—please contact me if you have concerns.

Restoration of these health care appropriations will help many of our fellow Missourians to better health and meet one of our LWVMO Legislative Priorities for this year and the future, that being “Affordable, comprehensive health care for all Missouri citizens.”

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February 8, 2015

TO: House Committee on Appropriations—Health, Mental Health and Social Services
Rep. Marsha Haefner, Chair
Rep. David Wood, Vice-Chair
Rep. Courtney Allen Curtis
Rep. Keith Frederick
Rep. Jeanne Kirkton
Rep. Bonnaye Mims
Rep. Jim Neely
Rep. Holly Rehder
Rep. Becky Ruth
Rep. John Wiemann

Rep. John Diehl, Speaker of the House
Rep. Tom Flanigan, House Budget Committee Chair

FROM: Barbara Davis, Health Chair
League of Women Voters of Missouri
bdavis@socket.net

In 2015 one of the Legislative Priorities for the League of Women Voters of Missouri is “Affordable, comprehensive health care for all Missouri citizens.” Therefore, we strongly urge your committee to restore the funding for the following programs which was either vetoed by the governor or cut from appropriations during the 2014 Legislative Session: Dental Care for Adults on Medicaid, the Show Me Healthy Babies program, the Smoking Cessation program and Community Health Center funding. These programs result in better health, and possibly life-saving care, for those needing them.

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Tax Policy – Nancy Copenhaver, Director and Tax Chair

Missouri House Committees Moving Tax Bills

Things are moving much more quickly than usual in the Missouri Legislature this year. The House is busy with the budget bills to try to get them on the Governor’s desk in time to allow time for veto overrides before the end of session. However, many bills are moving in the House as well affecting taxes, most of which extend or authorize tax credits, increase income tax deductions, exempt items from sales taxes, and add to sales tax holidays. All of these are problematic for the state budget which still has millions of dollars withheld by the Governor because taxes are coming in far below anticipated rates and the education foundation formula is underfunded by approximately \$600 million. League is opposed to expanding tax credits unless tax changes include more revenue to make up the difference.

This coming week (February 9-12) three House Committees are hearing such bills: Economic Development and Business Attraction and Retention Committee (nice title, eh?) hears **HB 468**, **HB 497**, and **HB 815** on February 10. The Ways and Means Committee hears **HB 114**, **HB 132**, **HB 410** on February 10 and MAY even exec (vote out of committee to send to the super committee) **HB 111**, and **HB 117**. The Small Business committee meets on February 11 to hear **HB 325** and **HB 677** both of which purport to reduce taxes. You can check to see if your representative is on one of these committees and express League's view of expanding tax breaks.

Positive News

On a good note, **SB 15** which creates a bi-partisan commission on State Tax Policy to study Missouri's tax code is on the Senate formal Calendar for Third Reading as **SS** for **SCS** for **SB 15** (which means it has been vetted and amended in committee and "polished" into a substitute bill). Call or e-mail your Senator to encourage support. It is sponsored by Sen. Bob Dixon (R) and Sen. Paul LeVota (D). The commission will identify strengths and weaknesses of the current tax structure and develop a broad range of improvements that could modernize the system, maximize economic growth, and fund necessary government service. A preliminary report from the commission is due at the end of 2016. The commission will conduct at least five meetings around the state to get public input for ideas about potential reforms. The last commission to study Missouri tax law was in 1968. As good as this sounds, keep in mind that lots of damage can be done before then.

Tax Exemptions Moving in Senate

Last year, Governor Nixon vetoed several tax proposals passed by the General Assembly on the final day of the session. Lawmakers were able to override a couple of the vetoes, but several proposals did not become law. These bills have been introduced again this session, and most have either been given a hearing or placed on the hearing schedule.

The Missouri Budget Project has not yet analyzed each specific proposal, in general it believes that decisions on specific tax exemptions should be part of a larger examination of Missouri's tax structure, as envisioned by the Tax Commission outlined previously. The Missouri Budget Project is often LWVMO's "go to" place for good analysis of tax issues and much of this information is taken from its weekly updates.

MBP notes that three tax related bills moved out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee (**SBs 18, 19, 20**) would cost the state nearly \$17 million in total and the committee has hearings planned for additional tax exemption bills.

A key bill to watch is **SB 4** (Schmitt) which would reduce the top rate of personal income tax over a period of years, which would make Missouri's tax structure more regressive (not a good thing). Another to watch is **SB 40** (LeVota) which authorizes an earned income tax credit for individuals that qualify for a federal earned income tax credit (which actually makes Missouri's income tax more progressive and helps lower income earners—a good thing).

Death Penalty - Sydell Shayer

HB 420 Introduced by Jeanne Kirkton - This bill eliminates the death penalty; any person sentenced prior to August 28, 2015 must be sentenced to life in prison without parole.

HB 561 Introduced by John Rizzo House Democratic Minority Whip
This bill establishes a Task Force on the Death Penalty. It will consist of ten members specified in the legislation. The task force is charged with analyzing the 2012 Missouri Death Penalty Assessment Report and its recommendations for promoting greater fairness and accuracy in the application of the death penalty. In addition the task force shall study the findings of the Death Penalty Proportionality Project conducted by the St. Louis University Law School. The task force may consider other appropriate academic information.

The task force shall make recommendations to prevent wrongful convictions and to promote fairness in the capital punishment system through legislation, regulation, and judicial and executive action to eliminate deficiencies. The task force shall convey its findings by January, 2018 to the governor, president pro tem of the senate, the speaker of the house and the chief justice of the Supreme Court at which time the task force shall expire.

There shall be a moratorium on executions between August 28, 2015 and January 2018. However, procedures in pending death penalty cases shall continue but no date may be set for execution during the moratorium.

SB 240 Introduced by Senator Keaveny and Senator Schaaf

The bill will require the State Auditor to issue a one-time report on the costs of administering the death penalty in Missouri. The report should look at a specified number of cases before 1990 where the death penalty was sought and carried out and the same number of cases where the death penalty was not sought and life in prison without parole was imposed and cases where the death penalty was sought, but not imposed. The amount spent on all staff and administration connected to these cases should be compared, including staff and salaries for all involved in capital cases, courts, public defenders, attorneys, prosecutors, correction department and so forth.

The report will be presented to the Governor, General Assembly and the Missouri Supreme Court by June 30, 2017

Other Death Penalty Bills:

HB 772 Introduced by Berry- Repeals provisions that allow the use of the death penalty in MO.

SB 393 Establishes a Task Force on the Death Penalty and places a moratorium until January 1, 2018

There are several other bills related to the death penalty filed in either the house or senate. They will be reported in future bulletins.

Helpful information:

The 2015 legislative session runs until May 15. To follow these and other issues before the Missouri Senate, visit www.senate.mo.gov. Visitors can track legislation considered by the General Assembly during the 2015 session, learn more about their legislative district and listen to streaming audio of legislative debate as it happens on the Senate floor.

The Missouri Senate's Capitol Briefing will be distributed and posted weekly throughout session. For more legislative news, please visit the Senate newsroom at www.senate.mo.gov/newsroom, where you will find various audio and video programs and other informational services, such as:

Missouri Legislative Update – A video program produced throughout the legislative session and interim that provides an overview of news in the Missouri Senate and House of Representatives. The program features news interviews with lawmakers conducted by Missouri's Bob Priddy and stories on issues concerning Missourians.

This Week in the Missouri Senate – A weekly, audio program that wraps up the week's news in the Missouri Senate. Programs are posted online every Friday in .mp3 format.

The Senate Minute – A condensed, one-minute audio report of current Senate news. Programs are posted in .mp3 format and are available through podcast.

Daily Audio/Video Clips – Throughout the year, the Senate Newsroom posts broadcast-quality audio and video highlights from Senate committee hearings, floor debate, press conferences and other legislative events. Please note: Clips linked to this Capitol Briefing are only available for the legislative week referenced in the publication.

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