



# LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI**

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## **IT'S SPRING TIME AT THE CAPITOL...ALSO RALLY TIME AND LOBBY DAYS!**

If you missed the Medicaid Rally on March 19<sup>th</sup>, it was a great event with several League members in attendance. It was an ACTION DAY with prayers, chants, and singing starting prior to the 10 am Senate session in hallways outside the Senate chambers. The Senate conveniently post-poned their starting time rather than come out of their offices to enter the chamber. This action continued for some time circling the House chamber.

After lunch, the ralliers went outside continuing their chants, etc, with great leaders, to the intersection at Jefferson toward Madison and stopped traffic for brief periods. It was a good experience with people of all ages and backgrounds including many faith participants, people with disabilities, and many young people. Read more about Medicaid rallies in the Health Care Report.

If you have not visited our Capitol or not in Spring time, this is a good time to attend the EQUAL RIGHTS ACTION DAY on April 14. The LWVMO will be participating. Please join us at this event. See information in the March-April MO Voter.

On Wednesday, April 22 Missouri Clean Energy Coalition composed of several environmental groups will be celebrating Earth Day at the Capitol. Senators and Representatives need to know that Missourians support clean air and water as well as renewable energy and greater energy efficiency. It will begin at 10 a.m. - please be in Hearing Room 2 in the basement of the Missouri Capitol Building at 9:50 a.m. There will be an Earth Day rally in the Capitol rotunda at 2 pm ending by 3:30 p.m.

The LWV Metro St. Louis is a member of the Missouri Clean Energy Coalition. All League members are welcome to participate.

*Marty Ott, Legislative Action Chair*

***PLEASE SAVE YOUR LEGISLATIVE BULLETINS TO USE FOR REFERENCE AS LEGISLATION TRACKING CONTINUES THROUGH THE 2015 SESSION.***

## **Health Care – Barbara Davis, Director and Health Care Chair**

HEALTH LEGISLATIVE REPORT—4/2/2015

Barbara Davis, LWVMO Health Chair

First, a big “Thank you” to the LWVMO members who made the trip to Jefferson City to participate in the “DAY OF ACTION” for Medicaid Expansion at and near the Capitol on March 19. From the media coverage I saw, your attendance and fervor were quite noticeable!

There will be statewide lobbying days on April 22, April 29, May 6 and May 12. RSVP to [mohealthcareforall@gmail.com](mailto:mohealthcareforall@gmail.com) or <http://bit.ly/MOlobby2015>. NOTE: Either one of these addresses must be typed in—neither address is a direct link from this document. If you plan to attend one of these rallies, I would appreciate your letting me know at [bdavis@socket.net](mailto:bdavis@socket.net). I just received these dates yesterday and haven’t had an opportunity to contact the LWVMO Board to determine if we want to get LWVMO members there on any particular date.

There will be a statewide media tour supporting Medicaid Expansion beginning April 8. If they are coming to your city and you wish to help, contact Missouri Health Care for All at the first email address above.

Now for the news...separated into Missouri and national:

This past Tuesday the Missouri Senate, after about two hours of debate, voted along party lines to defeat SB210 to expand Medicaid eligibility.

SB419 would close the coverage gap for Missourians who make too much to qualify for Medicaid but not enough to receive discounts in the Health Insurance Marketplace. What needs to happen now is for the General Assembly to pass legislation which would revise eligibility for Medicaid to 133% of the Federal Poverty Level for adults. Republican Sen. Silvey has proposed SB419 which contains some very poor ideas but could serve as the vehicle for Medicaid Expansion, which Sen. Silvey supports. We need to pressure state senators and state representatives to debate possible Medicaid Expansion policy and find a viable solution to help the Missourians who really need it. **WHAT WE CAN DO**: Contact our state legislators and urge them to have the debate and find a solution for Medicaid Expansion in Missouri.

SB51 would block health insurance discounts which make health insurance affordable by discounting insurance premium costs which make insurance coverage possible for more than 217,000 Missourians. This bill has been heard but, as of April 1, not voted out of the Senate Small Business, Insurance and Industry Committee. It would be best for this bill not to be voted out of the committee, thus dying and not being voted on by the entire Senate. **WHAT WE CAN DO**: Contact our state senators, urging them to oppose action on SB51.

SB322 would raise asset limits for adults with disabilities. The limits are still at the rates which were set in 1967, which were \$999 for an individual or \$1,999 for a couple. SB322 would gradually raise the limits to \$5000 for individuals and \$10,000 for couples. **WHAT WE CAN**

DO: The bill is scheduled for third reading today in the Senate. If it passes in the Senate it will go to the House. We need to encourage the General Assembly to pass it and send it to Gov. Nixon, at which time we need to ask him to sign it into law.

REINSTATEMENT OF DENTAL CARE FOR ADULTS ON MEDICAID: The dental coverage for adults on Medicaid was approved by the General Assembly in 2014, but withheld from the 2015 budget by Gov. Nixon. WHAT WE CAN DO; Contact and urge Gov. Nixon to release the 2015 dental funding and not withhold the 2016 dental funding, which is included in the 2016 draft budget.

And now...we move to the national scene...

CHIP, the Children's Health Insurance Program, has been in the news the past week because on March 26 the U.S. House of Representatives voted to extend CHIP funding for two years. CHIP funding expires in September unless reauthorized. The Senate must vote on reauthorization when they return April 13, and it is hoped they amend the bill to be reauthorized for the usual four years rather than two. If CHIP isn't reauthorized, more than 38,000 Missouri children (and more than eight million nationwide) will lose their health insurance. CHIP covers children in working families who don't have health insurance through their parents' employer. WHAT WE CAN DO: Contact our U.S. senators—Senator Claire McCaskill and Senator Roy Blunt--and request that they reauthorize the CHIP bill, including other issues in the same bill soon as they return to Washington.

Arguments in *King v. Burrell* were heard by the U.S. Supreme Court on March 4. The decision probably won't be released until mid-to-late June. This year 250,000+ Missourians enrolled in health insurance plans through the Health Insurance Marketplace, with more than 217,000 qualified for subsidies at a discount without which they would be unable to afford insurance. Depending upon the decision of the Supreme Court, health insurance subsidies could become unavailable in Missouri and more than thirty more states, thereby causing an estimated 152,000 Missourians from being able to purchase affordable health insurance through the Marketplace. WHAT WE CAN DO: Participate in decision-day rallies in where health care advocates will gather, hopefully to celebrate the decision, and to make plans for the future. Register with Missouri Health Care for All to receive email updates and/or to help plan a rally.

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## **Tax Policy – Nancy Copenhaver, Director and Tax Chair**

The House gave first round approval (Perfection vote) to HCS/HJR 34 (Burlison) on March 30. HJR 34 is a constitutional spending limit similar to the Colorado provision known as "TABOR" or the so-called "Taxpayer Bill of Rights." LWV opposes this unneeded restriction. The HJR would impose a permanent, constitutional spending limit on state government and would limit annual growth in state appropriations to a cost of living adjustment factor plus a population growth factor. The HJR also mandates automatic, permanent income tax reductions based upon yearly revenue growth conditions. Please contact your Representative to

vote against HCS/HJR 34. Then contact your Senator to express your wish that it not pass the Senate. We will keep you informed if/when it passes the House and is in a Senate committee. (It is my opinion that this will probably pass the House but face much stiffer opposition in the Senate where different rules and more extensive debate and compromise are the norm.)

Since the House has passed their version of the 2016 budget and the Senate is closing in on their version, our main focus regarding tax issues is to express the importance of NO new or increased tax credits that would put the adopted budget out of balance. Once the budget is adopted, any additional tax credits adopted would jeopardize the “balance” of the budget, requiring the Governor to then withhold items to bring the budget into balance. And, since the adoption of Constitutional Amendment 10 last year, the legislature could then override the Governor’s withholding, putting the budget and the state’s credit rating in jeopardy.

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**From the League of Women Voters**

**Making Democracy Work**

*Nancy Tate, Executive Director*

April 2 marks one year since the Supreme Court invalidated limits on the total amount an individual can donate to candidates or political parties in *McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission* (FEC). As LWVUS president Elisabeth MacNamara stated at the time, **in this decision the Court said that big money is worth more than the voices of individual citizens.**

The 2014 midterm elections were held just six months after this decision, but the results were dramatic:

The 2014 midterm elections were the **most expensive midterms in U.S. history**

Although the amount of money spent went up, the number of donors actually went down

A mere 604 individual donors were able to pump **\$31 million more into the election than if the limits stayed in place**—that’s \$51,234 more per donor

This isn’t the way democracy is supposed to work. Coupled with the disastrous decision in *Citizens United*, which led to the rise of SuperPACs by allowing unlimited spending by outside groups, our election system is being taken over by an increasingly small number of wealthy donors and special interests who are trying to buy our politicians. **The League of Women Voters is fighting back against this rising tide**, pushing for regulations to ensure our democracy is in the hands of the people—not the highest bidder.

Stand with us!

Helpful information:

To find your state officials go to [www.moga.mo.gov](http://www.moga.mo.gov) Click on member look-up and then follow prompts to either put in your mailing address or your 9 digit zipcode.