



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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Equal Rights Action Day – Marty Ott, Director and Legislative Action Chair

Several members of the League of Women Voters of Missouri, along with other women organizations, participated in the annual Equal Rights Action Day for Women at the state Capitol on April 14, 2015. The American Association of University Women organized the Equal Rights Rally.

Legislators who briefed attendees included Representatives Genise Montecillo, Judy Morgan, Deb Lavender, Margo McNeil and others. All was not bad news. Senator Paul LeVota delivered good news that his SB 144 was voted out of committee. This requires the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations to create best practice guidelines in gender pay equality for state and local government and private businesses. In his press release Senator LeVota stated:

"This is an important issue that must be addressed," said Sen. LeVota. "It is a matter of fairness. I want to ensure that not only my daughters, but all of our daughters, mothers, sisters and so forth are provided every opportunity to receive fair and equal pay."

Speakers for the various women's organizations included: AAUW, Coalition of Union Labor Women, League of Women Voters-Missouri, NARAL, Planned Parenthood, Women's Leadership Coalition, Women's Political Caucus, and the Missouri Women's Network. Kathleen Farrell, Co-president of the LWVSTL, spoke on behalf of the LWVMO detailing our efforts and success in defeating the (sham) Early Voting Amendment and our current testimonies in opposition to the Voter Photo ID HB 30 and HJR 1, requiring a current government issued photo ID to vote.

Health Care – Barbara Davis, Director and Health Care Chair

“Affordable health care for all Missouri citizens”
One of the LWVMO Legislative Priorities for 2015

Yes, we’re still working toward this goal! One of the ways we can help is by participating in one or both of the Lobby Days at the Capitol May 6 and May 13. Activities will begin with training and distribution of materials at 9:45 a.m., followed by lobbying legislators. Everything will conclude around 2:30 p.m. So that Missouri Health Care for All can have enough printed materials on hand, it is necessary to register with an RSVP to <http://bit.ly/MOlobby2015>. For more information, contact mohealthcareforall@gmail.com or call 877-383-8884. I would appreciate your letting me know you will be participating by emailing me at bdavis@socket.net. Please note: the email addresses must be typed in because none of them are direct links from this document.

Now, for a brief report on the status of some important bills we’ve been following in the legislature.

HB10: Appropriations bill for the Department of Social Services—Passed by House and Senate and delivered to Gov. Nixon;

HB11: Appropriations bill for Departments of Health and Mental Health, as well as Board of Public Buildings—Passed by House and Senate and delivered to Gov. Nixon;

SB24: Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)---TANF program will be cut from current lifetime limit of five years to three years and nine months for low-income families receiving a monthly allowance through the TANF program. In addition, if parents fail to meet work requirements within six weeks, their benefits would be cut in half. If they then fail to meet the ten-week limit to comply with all requirements, they will receive a lifetime ban from the program. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is included in this bill;

SB322: Raises the asset limit for people with disabilities. On April 27 it was reported “Do Pass” by the Select Committee on Social Services;

SB419: More testimony may be heard on this bill filed by Sen. Silvey because time ran out last week, Called the Healthcare Transportation Trust Fund, it would expand Medicaid by the use of block grants.

On the federal level, since our last publication, the US Senate voted to fund the Children’s Health Insurance Program, often referred to as CHIP, for two more years. If anything notable occurs this week, I will distribute an update at the LWVMO Convention. Otherwise, my next report will be in the next Legislative Bulletin.

Tax Policy – Nancy Copenhaver, Director and Tax Chair

EITC

The House has passed HB 1296 (Mike Kelly) which would create a non-refundable state earned income tax credit (EITC) equal to 20 percent of the federal earned income credit. EITCs encourage and reward work as well as offset payroll and income taxes. State EITCs have been adopted in 26 states, including many of Missouri's neighbors. The bill has passed the House with amendments.

Earlier in the session the Senate Ways and Means Committee passed a companion bill, SCS SB 40, sponsored by Senator Paul LeVota. Based on data from the Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy, Missourians with incomes ranging from \$12,000 - \$46,000 on average would receive the greatest impact from SB 40 and HB 1296.

The measures would reduce state revenue by \$60 million annually, not good news, but at least this tax credit benefits those at the lower income levels.

The Missouri Budget Project has long advocated for a Missouri State Earned Income Tax Credit because of the beneficial impact that the federal credit and similar credits have had in other states for family earnings, educational attainment for children and lasting economic benefits.

EVERYTHING TAX

The House Select Committee on Financial Institutions and Taxation did not move forward on the "Everything Tax." While HB 590 appeared on the committee's hearing agenda, it was never brought to a vote. Committee members appear skeptical of the idea that would increase the sales taxes paid by Missourians, while lowering income tax.

TABOR

A proposal that would force permanent cuts to K-12 education, higher education, public safety and corrections, health care and other key services that support Missouri's economy and quality of life has reached the Senate calendar. The proposal, called TABOR after a similar ill-fated measure in Colorado, would impose a rigid formula intended to limit growth in state spending, and is flawed in many ways. TABOR (so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights) is a constitutional spending limit.

House Joint Resolution 34 would place language on the November 2016 ballot that would limit the growth of state General Revenue appropriations from year to year to no greater than the annual rate of inflation plus population change in the state. The HJR also mandates automatic, permanent income tax reductions based upon yearly revenue growth conditions.

TABOR is both detrimental to Missouri and flawed in many ways, including:

- Missouri revenue is already limited by the Hancock Amendment, and revenues in 2013 were already \$3.5 billion under that limit. In fact, relative to personal income, state general revenue is at near record lows. As a result of low revenues, exacerbated by the most recent economic recession, Missouri has cut many services over the years, which it has yet to restore.
- Moreover, the growth limit based on inflation plus population is flawed because state services grow at different rates than consumer goods and services do, which is what inflation measures. For example, services needs that respond to changing population demographics, such as increases in the senior population or increases in the number of kids who require special education, are not reflected in the consumer price index of inflation.

The bill is currently in the Senate Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee, but has been placed on the Senate calendar.

NOW IS THE TIME TO CALL, E-MAIL YOUR SENATOR TO OPPOSE HJR 34. Remember that this is a constitutional amendment which means that it does NOT go to the Governor for the chance to be vetoed but goes directly to a vote of the people if passed by both houses.

Death Penalty – Sydell Shayer, Chair

The League of Women Voters supports abolition of the Death Penalty. The present legislative session saw several very good bills which would bring the state closer to abolition. Unfortunately none of them have made any progress in the General Assembly. Only one actually had a hearing and that was in March. No action was taken on it.

The subjects covered in the introduced bills ranged from using the recommendations from previous studies on the death penalty, to studies on the cost of administering the death penalty, to a moratorium of the death penalty until other issues are resolved, to outright abolishment of the death penalty.

As of today, April 15, it appears that the 2015 session of the legislature will again close without any death penalty bills enacted. Having given a glimpse of where Missouri stands on the death penalty, there are positive actions being taken in other parts of the country. I hope to give an overview of the state of the death penalty in the United States in either the In League Reporter or the Missouri Voter. Stay tuned!

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

HB30 and HJR1, the Voter Photo ID bill and constitutional amendment, were voted out of the Senate Financial and Governmental Organizations and Election Committee on April 15, 2015. Marty Ott, representing the LWVMO, testified in opposition to the bill at the Committee Hearing. Also, League member, Marilyn McLeod, presented opposing testimony as an individual.

HJR1 was voted due pass out of the Senate Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee on April 27, 2015 and placed on the Senate Informal Calendar. These bills will be watched for near future action.

Helpful information:

To find your state officials go to 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.

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