

January 12, 2024

The forecast was the hottest topic this week, but the first full week of session is officially behind us. Both chambers dedicated the majority of their week referring bills and some committee hearings were completed. Despite what happens in each chamber this week, I think committee work will move quickly. Be ready. FYI.

Some of the hot goss from the week... Secretary Jay Ashcroft was swatted. Not good. You can read more in the [MoIndy](#). And, maybe be on the lookout for a bill. The President Pro Tem says it's time for [crackdown](#). You may have learned about swatting on the Netflix series Web of Make Believe: Lies, Death and the Internet.

Sarah Unsicker (R - Shrewsbury) is running for governor. She was running for attorney general. Find out more about her gubby bid [here](#).

Blaine says peace out. Congressman Blaine Luetkemeyer (R - Missouri) announced he will not seek reelection. Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman has officially declared. I was just on the phone with her and she has already raised \$150k since announcing. She's on a roll. Who else might be tossing their name in? Bob Onder, Tricia Byrnes, Travis Fitzwater, Dave Schatz, Robb Vescovo. Word is Caleb Rowden and Nick Schroer have both said no, thanks.

And, the conservative caucus is now the freedom caucus. I get confused. [KWMU](#) has some insight.

And, yesterday, the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals announced its holding that Missouri can sue China for reasons related to Covid-19. Check out the ruling [here](#).

A recap of the week, committee notes, a budget update and key dates are below. Stay warm out there and talk to you soon!

Tidbits

* Unilever, one of the world's largest consumer goods companies, announced that it will expand its facility in Jefferson City, investing \$25 million in a new warehouse on the current property. The company's expansion will enhance its current warehouse operations to help optimize its North American logistics network. Unilever's Jefferson City location, in operation since 1966, employs more than 400 workers and manufactures liquid hair and body care products that include well-known brands such as Dove, Nexxus, TRESemmé, and Vaseline. As part of its expansion, the company will add an automated warehouse solution that is integrated with its factory to support shipments and repack operations. The building project is expected to begin in the second quarter of 2024 and will be completed by the end of 2025.

* Jefferson City police are investigating a "swatting" call that sent half a dozen armed officers to the home of Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft on Sunday evening. Secretary Ashcroft said

officers told him the report was anonymous. Currently, it is a class B misdemeanor, punishable by up to six months in jail, to make a false report accusing someone of a crime.

* On Monday, embattled Representative Sarah Unsicker (D-Shrewsbury) announced that she is running for Governor. After some questionable social media activity Representative Unsicker was removed from her committee assignments and expelled from the House Democratic caucus. She joins a race that involves House Minority Leader Crystal Quade (D-Springfield) and businessman Mike Hamra.

* On Thursday, the City of Columbia announced they have received a federal grant of \$3.6 million to build 44 electric vehicle charging stations. The award is one of nearly 50 projects across 22 states and Puerto Rico under the U.S. Department of Transportation's Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) grant program that aims to build an electric vehicle charging network. To date, Columbia is the only grant recipient in Missouri.

Budget Update

This week was relatively quiet on the budget front. The House Subcommittee on Appropriations-General Administration was scheduled to meet but due to the inclement weather, the hearing was postponed to next Wednesday. The Office of the Governor, Lt. The Governor, Secretary of State and Attorney General have yet to present their FY2024 Supplemental requests or their FY2025 budget requests and the committee will also need to hear from the Judiciary and Public Defender's Office.

The Senate Appropriations Committee has also posted a hearing for next Wednesday but will be focusing on policy issues rather than receiving testimony from the various departments regarding their FY25 budget requests. The bill scheduled to be heard is SB 748, sponsored by Senator Lincoln Hough (R-Springfield) and is the renewal of the Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) taxes. These taxes are critical to funding the state's Medicaid program and without them it would face a catastrophic shortfall.

Transportation Update

The House Committee on Transportation Accountability convened Thursday morning to consider a presentation from MoDOT regarding Interstate Highway improvements, snow removal and general maintenance of infrastructure. The Director of the Improve I-70 Program, Eric Kapinsky, updated the committee on the status of contracts awarded and projects to be completed. He noted on February 14th the first project will be awarded and plan to have a groundbreaking by the end of May. This project's cost will be approximately \$340 million, will take place at the Hwy 63/I-70 interchange in Columbia and is the largest single project ever undertaken by MoDOT. He concluded his statements by stating MoDOT's intent is to publish monthly updates for the public and the legislature to be as transparent with timelines and costs.

The committee then moved on to questions regarding snow removal and was informed MoDOT is still several hundred FTE short on the maintenance and snow removal crews. The committee learned that even with the shortages the recent storm was handled exceptionally well, and the majority of main roads were cleared on time. However, there is concern that if a major storm lasting more than 24 to 48 hours were to occur the times for clearing roads up to the current safety standards would increase significantly and impact traffic patterns. Chairman Don Mayhew (R-Crocker) announced his intent to hold monthly updated meetings with MoDOT to ensure transparency on all highway projects and staffing levels.

Committee Notes

Public Employee Incentive Programs

The House Committee on Government Efficiency and Downsizing convened Wednesday morning to discuss HB 1648, sponsored by Representative John Black (R-Marshfield). The bill allows state agencies and political subdivisions to provide certain pre-approved pay incentives up to 20% of the base salary of an employee for the purpose of retaining employees. Additionally, the legislation codifies the differentiated pay scale in public schools to allow school district boards to approve pay scales outside of the regular scale for hard to staff or hard to fill positions. The sponsor stated the intent of the legislation is to provide a roadmap for state agencies to provide bonuses to employees without violating the provision within the Constitution that prohibits providing incentives "beyond the fact" to public employees. Aligned provided supporting testimony stating differentiated pay would be a critical tool to help with teacher recruitment and retention. American Federation of Teachers and SEIU Healthcare Workers provided opposing testimony stating this could impact collective bargaining agreements for those with public contracts and would like to see language included which would negate any potential impact.

Unemployment Compensation

The Senate Committee on General Laws convened Wednesday morning to discuss SB 745, sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). Currently, the maximum duration for an individual to receive unemployment benefits is 20 weeks. The bill ties the maximum amount of time people are eligible to collect unemployment benefits to the state's unemployment rate. According to the language, an additional week is added for each 0.5 percentage point that the unemployment rate rises above 5.5 percent, up to a maximum of 20 weeks if the unemployment rate goes above nine percent. Associated Industries of Missouri and Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry provided supporting testimony. The AFL-CIO provided opposing testimony.

New House Committees Formed

The following are new committees which were created, and the committee members assigned to these committees:

Special Committee on Education Reform:

Representative Bishop Davidson, Chair
Representative Justin Hicks, Vice Chair
Representative Mark Sharp, Ranking Minority Member
Representative Phil Christofanelli
Representative Chris Dinkins
Representative Ben Keathley
Representative Ian Mackey
Representative Bob Titus
Representative Cheri Toalson Reisch
Representative Kevin Windham

Special Committee on Policy Review:

Representative Chris Dinkins, Chair
Representative Paula Brown, Vice Chair
Representative Gretchen Bangert
Representative Barry Hovis
Representative Louis Riggs

Special Committee on Property Tax Reform:

Representative Brad Christ, Chair
Representative Aaron McMullen, Vice-Chair
Representative Robert Sauls, Ranking Minority Member
Representative Ashley Bland Manlove
Representative Chris Brown
Representative Donnie Brown
Representative Cyndi Buchheit-Courtway
Representative Tricia Byrnes
Representative Darin Chappell
Representative Jeff Coleman
Representative Aaron Crossley
Representative Anthony Ealy
Representative David Evans

Representative Sherri Gallick
Representative Wendy Hausman
Representative Dave Hinman
Representative Keri Ingle
Representative Jamie Johnson
Representative Chris Lonsdale
Representative Mark Matthiesen
Representative Peggy McGaugh
Representative Mike McGirl
Representative Jim Murphy
Representative Chantelle Nickson-Clark
Representative Sean Pouche
Representative Raychel Proudie
Representative Rodger Reedy
Representative Mark Sharp
Representative Travis Smith
Representative Dan Stacy
Representative Kemp Strickler

31 members... yowza.

Upcoming Hearings of Interest

[House](#)

[Senate](#)

Key Dates:

- January 15, 2024 – MLK Day – No Session
- January 24, 2024- State of the State Address
- February 19, 2024 – President’s Day – IN SESSION
- March 1, 2024 – Last day of bill filing
- March 18-22, 2024 - Legislative Spring Break
- April 1, 2024 – Easter Break – No Session
- April 2, 2024 – General Municipal Elections
- May 10, 2024 – Last Day to Constitutionally pass the FY 2025 Budget
- May 17, 2024 – Last Day of the 2024 Legislative session
- August 6, 2024 – Missouri Primary Elections
- September 11, 2024 – Veto Session
- November 5, 2024 – Missouri General Elections

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