

Week 12 is in the books!

A summary of the week, a budget update, floor and committee notes are below. It was a tame week, folks. For the most part.

Please don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns. We are getting down to the wire. Senate Appropriations Chair Dan Hegeman announced he believes the state legislature is behind three weeks on its budget responsibilities. The full budget is due May 6.

The Covid-19 Pandemic is Over in Missouri!

On Wednesday, Governor Mike Parson declared the Coronavirus Pandemic officially over in Missouri. During a press conference at the State Capitol, Parson said the state will be shifting to an endemic phase of the pandemic on Friday, April 1, 2022.

Over the past two years, the state was able to achieve some incredible milestones in responding to COVID-19:

- Testing Capacity - More than 14 million tests performed by public health partners
- Treatment Options - More than 81,000 treatment courses distributed by the State of Missouri
- Vaccine Availability - More than 8.7 million doses administered by public health partners

Commonly Asked Questions about Missouri's Medical Marijuana Program

On KTRS' McGraw Milhaven Show this week, Missouri medical marijuana company BeLeaf CEO Mitch Meyers addressed commonly asked questions about how to get a medical marijuana card, rules and regulations, the patient experience and the future of the marijuana industry in the state and the federal level. You can check it out [here](#).

Candidate Filing

The filing deadline for the 2022 primary election was 5 p.m. on Tuesday. Some people are happy and some are sad. Incumbents found themselves with opponents and others that were expecting a fight will not have a primary election. Some of the notable takeaways:

State Senator Steve Roberts (D - St. Louis) will challenge Congresswoman Cori Bush (D – St. Louis). Bush beat former Congressman Lacy Clay (D - St. Louis) in a primary election in 2020.

Former State Senator Scott Sifton (D – St. Louis) withdrew from the Democratic primary for the United State Senate to replace retiring Roy Blunt (R) and has endorsed a new candidate, Trudy Busch Valentine (D – St. Louis).

For a review of candidate filings, please visit the Missouri Secretary of State's [website](#).

House Says Hard Pass to the Senate Congressional Redistricting Map

The House is rejecting the congressional district map passed by the Senate last week after almost two months of negotiations, filibustering and infighting. On Tuesday, the House defeated the Senate map version by a vote of 26-129 and requested the bill be sent to a conference committee. Word on the street is Senate Republican Leadership is down for a conference committee, but Senate Democrats and the Conservative Caucus are not. Stay tuned.

The chatter in the hallways goes like this: If you recall, the House originally sent the Senate a 6 Republican – 2 Democrat split redistricting map and the Senate revised the 6-2 map with numerous district line changes: including bizarre changes such as splitting the University of Missouri campus down the middle.

Many capitol observers believe the courts will soon intervene and take control to create a final Senate redistricting map.

Your Floor and Committee Notes this Week

Transportation Accountability Fund

The Senate Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 1163, sponsored by Senator Dan Hegeman (R-Cosby). The bill creates the "Transportation Accountability Fund" within the Department of Transportation to be used for highway system uses and purposes. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented.

Unemployment Compensation

Senator Cindy O’Laughlin (R-Shelbina) appeared before the Senate Small Business and Industry Committee Tuesday morning to present SB 1114. The bill modifies the definition of wages for purposes of employment security law to include termination pay and severance pay. The MO Department of Labor and Industry, Associated Industries of MO, MO Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and MO Retailers Association supported the bill. No opposing testimony was provided.

Professional Employer Organizations

The Senate Insurance and Banking Committee convened Tuesday afternoon to consider passage of SB 904, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg). The bill provides that both a client and a registered professional employer organization (PEO) shall each be deemed an employer for purposes of sponsoring retirement and welfare benefits plans for its covered employees. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

Legislative Control over MoDOT Funding

The House Special Committee on Government Oversight convened Tuesday afternoon to consider passage of HJR 137, sponsored by Representative J. Eggleston (R-Maysville). Upon voter approval, this proposed Constitutional amendment would place any future gas tax under the Hancock amendment. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-3 vote.

Relating to the transfer of the federal Older Americans Act to the Department of Health and Senior Services

The Senate Seniors, Families, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss passage of SB 1045, sponsored by Senator Jill Schupp (D-District 24).

This act modifies several provisions relating to the duties of the Department of Health and Senior Services, including: the Alzheimer’s State Plan Task Force; medical student loan programs; the Older Americans Act; oversight of healthcare facilities; organ donation; and repeal of statutes relating to certain duties of the Department. After discussion substitute language was adopted, once modified the committee passed the bill by a vote of (4-2).

Elimination of Taxes

The House Pensions Committee met Wednesday morning to discuss HB 2853, sponsored by Representative David Evans (R-West Plains). The bill eliminates any Missouri social security taxes on retirement, disability, and survivors benefits. During the bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members that 38 other states currently do not have any taxes on benefits and his intent with the legislation is to help those that are in need and those that are on a fixed income. No supporting or opposing testimony was provided.

Retirement System Modifications

The House Pensions Committee convened Wednesday morning to consider passage of HB 2161, sponsored by Representatives Chris Dinkins (R-Lesterville). The bill allows members of the Public School Retirement System of Missouri who have 32 or more years of creditable service, regardless of age, to have their retirement allowance calculated using a multiplier of 2.55%. Additionally, HB 2161 contains an emergency clause. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted to remove the emergency clause. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote.

Income Tax Reduction

The Senate Ways and Means Committee met Thursday morning to consider passage of SB 1067, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg). Current law provides for multiple reductions in the top rate of income tax in annual 0.1% increments, provided net general revenue collections exceed a certain threshold. This act reduces such net general revenue collection threshold from \$150 million to \$100 million. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 3-1 vote.

Fiscal Year 2022 Supplemental Budget

The Senate Appropriations Committee reviewed the Fiscal Year 2022 Supplemental Budget this week. HB 3015 provides payments for programs and services to finish the last few months of the current fiscal year that ends on June 30, 2022. HB 3015 is the second supplemental budget that has been considered this session. Previously passed, HB 3014, provided “emergency” supplemental funding for items related to ongoing pandemic recovery efforts across the state.

Two major additions to the supplemental budget offered by Governor Parson included in HB 3015 are a \$20 million for Close the Gap Program and \$20 million for summer learning. Both programs are intended to get started as soon as

possible for school districts across the state to help students recover from learning loss over the course of the pandemic. Summer learning would specifically help school districts to begin preparing for summer school now before it begins in June. Close the Gap Program is intended to help students recover from learning loss through tutoring, specific learning programs to help students reach grade level learning, and outside classroom assistance in one-on-one and/or small group settings. Chairman Sen. Hegeman (R – Cosby) and Vice-Chair Sen. Hough (R – Springfield) both expressed concerns with the second supplemental budget. They are weary that such a magnitude of new spending is to be considered in a supplemental bill.

The committee also asked Budget Director Dan Haug why the state's emergency declaration has been eliminated while Missouri is continuing to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on COVID response activities. He responded that the funding being allocated may not be entirely expended if COVID-19 continues to decline.

State Budget Update

The House Budget Committee is drafting the House version of the Fiscal Year 2023 Budget at the time of this report. The committee members are currently in the middle of a marathon hearing to work through a lengthy list of committee members amendments that could alter funding for various programs and services across the state operating budget bills that make up the state operating budget (HBs 3001 – 3013) and in the American Rescue Plan (ARPA) spending package (HB 3020).

If changes or discussion occurs of interest to any funding priorities, we will notify you directly via email.

Next week, the House of Representatives will take up the state operating budget bills and the ARPA bill for debate. That will leave four weeks left before the Constitutional deadline to pass the state budget on Friday, May 6th.

Tidbits

- The House Special Committee on Homeland Security convened Monday afternoon to consider passage of HB 2913 sponsored by Representative Dean Plocher (R-St. Louis). The bill prohibits state entities and private businesses that are receiving public funds from contracting with Russia, Russian entities, or any other country currently occupying or attacking a NATO ally. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted to clarify grocery stores, pharmacies, or any other entity providing aid to Russian civilians are allowed to continue their contracts. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 7-0 vote.
- The House Workforce Development Committee convened Monday afternoon to consider passage of HB 1956, sponsored by Representative Doug Richey (R - Excelsior Springs). The bill establishes the "Show Me Success Diploma Program" which is a pilot program established as an alternative to a traditional high school diploma. The bill also creates the "Competency-Based Education Grant Program" which allows DESE to award grants to school districts who choose to participate in the pilot program. Lastly, the bill creates the "Competency-Based Education Task Force" whose tasks are to create and develop competency based education programs for Missouri and create guidelines for school districts to follow when creating their own competency-based education programs. After brief discussion and no modifications, the committee passed the bill by a unanimous 13-0 vote.
- The Senate General Laws Committee convened Wednesday morning to discuss HB 1462, sponsored by Representative Adam Schnelting (R-St. Charles). The bill is the House companion to SB 804, sponsored by Senator Bob Onder (R-Lake St. Louis), and would allow concealed carrying of firearms on public transportation systems and transporting nonfunctional or unloaded firearms on public buses. Additionally, the bill establishes "Blair's Law" which states a person commits the offense of unlawful discharge of a firearm if that person, with criminal negligence, discharges a firearm within or into the limits of any municipality. The bill also removes the prohibition on the carrying of firearms in churches and other places of worship by a person with a valid concealed carry permit. The bill expands the listed items that satisfy the requirement that an applicant for a concealed carry permit demonstrate knowledge of firearms safety training to include, for active duty military service members, receipt of a pistol marksmanship award. The bill removes the ban on eligibility for a concealed carry permit or a Missouri lifetime or extended concealed carry permit if the applicant has pled guilty to or entered a plea of nolo contendere. Finally, the bill removes brass knuckles from the offense of knowingly possessing, manufacturing, transporting, repairing, or selling a deadly weapon. The National Rifle Association, MO Western Shooters Alliance, and several private citizens supported the bill. The MO Public Transit Association, City Utilities, Kansas City Public Transit Authority, City of Kansas City, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, National Council of Jewish Women St. Louis, Greater St. Louis, MO State Conference of the NAACP and several private citizens opposed the bill.

- The Senate Seniors, Families, Veterans & Military Affairs Committee convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss SB 1158, sponsored by Senator Justin Brown (R-Rolla) The bill, commonly known as Tobacco 21, aligns state statute with federal law and raises the age under which the sale of certain tobacco, alternative nicotine, or vapor products shall be prohibited from 18 years to 21 years. The language supersedes any local laws or ordinances impacting the sale of tobacco products. MO Smoke free, and MO Retailers Association supported the bill. The American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, MO Municipal League, MO State Medical Association and the Council for Drug Free Youth supported the intent of the legislation but opposed the bill due to language that supersedes any local laws or ordinances impacting the sale of tobacco products.
- The Senate Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and Environment Committee met Wednesday morning to consider passage of HB 1686, sponsored by Representative Bill Hardwick (R-Waynesville). The bill prohibits a public entity or person from requiring a COVID-19 vaccination for conditions of employment and further prohibits an employer from imposing a fine, tax, or criminal or civil penalty based on a person's COVID-19 vaccination status. The bill also adds additional protections to those entities governed by CMS to ensure federal funds are not affected. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.
- The committee then turned its attention towards HB 2358, sponsored by Representative Dave Evans (R-West Plains). The bill requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for COVID-19 vaccine mandates for those employees who hold sincerely held beliefs. If a COVID-19 vaccine is required, any resulting injuries would be considered an occupational disease. Refusal to take a COVID-19 vaccine for religious/ conscientious reasons does not disqualify an individual from unemployment compensation. Additionally, the bill includes language from HB 1861, regarding organ donations being allowed regardless of vaccine status. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.
- Governors from 21 states are suing to end the federal public transportation mask mandate, claiming the continued enforcement "harms the states" and interferes with some local laws. The filing comes just days after airline CEOs called on President Biden to drop the mandate. Joining the mostly Republican-led effort are three states with Democratic governors — Kansas, Kentucky and Louisiana. This legal action comes just weeks after the TSA decided to extend the mandate for mask use on public transportation and in transportation hubs through April 18. The mandate was originally set to expire on March 18.

Key Upcoming Dates

- April 18, 2022 – Easter Holiday – No Session
- May 6, 2022 – State Budget finalized per Missouri Constitution
- May 13, 2022 – Last day of the 2022 Legislative Session per Missouri Constitution
- July 1, 2022 – First day of Fiscal Year 2023
- July 14, 2022 – Last day for the Governor to Sign or Veto Bills
- August 28, 2022 – Date Most Legislation Takes Effect (unless another date is specified)
- September 14, 2022 – Veto Session

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