

March 4, 2022

For a short time this week, the Missouri Capitol Building seemed normal. It's like it was pre-Covid and pre-term limits. The building was filled with school and advocacy groups participating in democracy and exercising their franchises. The Senate even found common ground to consider and approve a few bills.

And then, that stopped. Bib-gate is back. The Missouri Senate adjourned abruptly Thursday morning after another war of words and insults were hurled between senators. Also this week, members of Senate leadership decided to take advantage of the unseasonably warm weather and went golfing and fishing. This did not sit well with members of the conservative caucus and especially Senator Mike Moon (R - Ash Grove). They decided enough time had been wasted.

Rumor has it that Senator Moon put his bibs back on and took to the hallways of the Capitol in protest. He had another day of filibustering on the Senate Floor before Majority Floor Leader Caleb Rowden (R - Columbia) shut that down.

One week remains before the General Assembly will take a break for its annual spring break starting on March 11. The break marks the halfway point of the legislative session and hopefully a cooling off period for legislators returning for the second half. The Missouri Constitution requires the FY2023 state budget to be passed by May 6.

Missouri Stops Business with Russia

This week State Treasurer Scott Fitzpatrick (R - Missouri) requested an emergency meeting with the state's employee retirement system (MOSERS) to prevent the future purchase of Russian securities and to discuss the strategic divestment of existing Russian holdings.

Yesterday afternoon, MOSERS' Board of Trustees and members unanimously passed Treasurer Fitzpatrick's motion to prevent the future acquisition of Russian holdings and plans to divest any current holdings prudently. You can read the Treasurers' Office press release [here](#).

Also, this week House Majority Floor Leader Dean Plocher (R - Town and Country) announced a bill he is sponsoring. [House Bill 2913](#) will forbid private businesses and state entities from doing business with Russia and Russian entities. The bill also suspends business with any country that attacks or occupies Ukraine. And on Tuesday, Governor Mike Parson (R - Missouri) ordered the Missouri State Capitol dome to shine blue and yellow, the colors of the Ukrainian national flag in solidarity with the Ukrainian people as they defend their country and democracy against Russian invasion.

New House Broadband Committee

Missouri House Speaker Rob Vescovo (R - Arnold) formed a new committee this week to handle broadband related issues. Representative Louis Riggs (R - Hannibal) has been selected as chairman of the committee and is the most familiar with Broadband issues, also serving as chairman of an interim broadband committee this summer. The following members have been appointed to serve on the committee:

Rep. Cindy Bucheit-Courtway (R - Festus), Rep. John Black (R - Marshfield), Rep. Tracy McCreery, (D - Olivette) Rep. Michael O'Donnell (R - Chillicothe), Rep. Doug Richey (R - Excelsior Springs, and Rep. Wes Rogers.

New Department of Health Director

On Monday, Governor Mike Parson (R - Missouri) Paula Nickelson as the new acting director of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Director Nickelson has worked with the department, she has led several programs and initiatives including maternal-child health, chronic disease prevention and emergency preparedness and response. The “acting” director title will allow for the appointment to remain in place without approval by the Missouri Senate.

Budget Update

The five House Appropriations Subcommittees are scheduled to finalize their budget recommendations next week. The recommendations will move to the full House Budget Committee for consideration when the legislature reconvenes after spring break. The thirty-one members of the House Budget Committee will work to draft their version of the State’s Fiscal Year 2023 Budget sometime during the week of March 21. It will have a lot to consider with the Governor’s proposed state operating budget including \$46 billion proposed spending and \$2.8 billion one-time federal funding of American Rescue Plan money.

In Committee and on the Floor this Week

Workplace Retirement Savings Plans

The House dedicated floor time Thursday morning to debate HB 1732, sponsored by Representative Michael O’Donnell (R-St. Louis). The bill establishes the "Missouri Workplace Retirement Savings Plan", which is a multiple-employer retirement savings plan treated as a single plan and establishes the plan as an “opt-out” requirement for employees. Additionally, the bill creates the “Missouri Workplace Retirement Savings Board” within the office of the State Treasurer, to design, develop, and implement the Plan. The bill also removes language establishing 5% of an employee’s salary as the starting point for contributions and modifies the employee “opt-out” requirement to an employee “opt-in” requirement. After brief discussion, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

Memorial Road Signs

The House Committee on Government Oversight convened Monday morning to discuss HB 2142, sponsored by Representative Don Mayhew (R-Crocker). The bill requires the Department of Transportation to pay all costs associated with the memorial highways and bridges honoring deceased Missouri veterans, deceased Missouri law enforcement officers, and VFW posts. The NAACP provided supporting testimony. The MO Department of Transportation provided opposing testimony.

MO Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees Retirement System

The House Consent and House Procedure Committee convened Tuesday morning to consider passage of HB 1984, sponsored by Representative Barry Hovis (R-Whitewater). The bill modifies the Board membership of the Missouri Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol Employees' Retirement System by having the terms of the active employee representatives serving on the Board on August 28, 2026, to continue an additional two years until June 30, 2028, and alters the terms to four years. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 8-0 vote.

Professional Employer Organizations (PEOs)

The House Consent and House Procedure Committee convened Tuesday morning to consider passage of HB 2400, sponsored by Representative Dan Houx (R-Warrensburg). This 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 covered employees. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 8-0 vote.

Ban on Electronic Devices While Driving

The Senate Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 713, sponsored by Senator Greg Razor (R-Kansas City). The bill limits the use of electronic devices for noncommercial vehicle drivers. An electronic device may be operated while the vehicle is in motion so long as the driver is not holding the device and is not distracted from driving. This bill also

restricts commercial vehicle drivers from operating a vehicle while using an electronic device. However, a text message may be sent if it can be done with one-touch and the driver never leaves the seat. Finally, electronic device usage while driving can be done if there is an emergency or roadside assistance is needed. MO Hands Free Coalition, AAA Missouri, MoDOT Traffic Safety Division, Jefferson City Police Department, Missouri Tow Truck Association, State Farm Insurance Company, Associated General Contractors of Missouri, Enterprise Leasing, Verizon, Police Chiefs Association, University of Missouri Healthcare System, Harrisonville Distracted Teen Program, MO Insurance Coalition, MO Chamber of Commerce and Industry, MO State Medical Association, General Motors, LLC, ABEC MO Motorcycle Club, TrailNet, and several private citizens provided supporting testimony and informed committee members the bill will increase safety on the roads as there is no current statute prohibiting drivers over twenty-two from using electronic devices while driving. It was also stated distracted driving increases auto insurance rates, has increased the number of fatalities for MoDOT highway workers, and civilian fatalities have increased as well. No opposing testimony was provided.

State Employee Pay Period

The Senate Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee met Thursday morning to discuss SB 997, sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). Current law requires the salaries of all elective and appointive officers and employees of the state to be paid out in semi-monthly or monthly installments. The bill allows salaries to additionally be paid out in biweekly installments. No supporting or opposing testimony was provided.

Personal Privacy Protection Act

The Senate Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee met Thursday morning to consider SB 741, sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffero). The bill establishes the Personal Privacy Protection Act, and prohibits public agencies from disclosing or requiring the disclosure of personal information. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted to clarify language. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-1 vote.

Tidbits

- The Department of Economic Development (DED) announced Tuesday that Missouri has been awarded a \$42.2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for broadband expansion. The funds received through the NTIA's Broadband Infrastructure Program will be used for projects benefiting more than 13,000 households in 12 Missouri counties: Boone, Butler, Jasper, Lincoln, Livingston, Marion, McDonald, Monroe, Pulaski, Shelby, St. Charles and St. Louis.
- The MO Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development released their MO Monthly Jobs Report this week. According to the report, Missouri's non-farm payroll employment increased from December 2021 to January 2022, and the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased by one-tenth of a percentage point. Employment, seasonally adjusted, increased by 9,100 jobs over the month, with job gains in both goods-producing and service-providing industries. The state's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate was 3.8 percent in January 2022, down from the annually revised 3.9 percent in December 2021. Over the year, there was an increase of 86,200 jobs from January 2021 to January 2022, and the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate decreased by 1.2 percentage points, from 5.0 percent in January 2021 to 3.8 percent in January 2022.
- The Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions & Ethics Committee met Tuesday morning to discuss SJR 36, Sponsored by Senator JJ Rizzo (D-Kansas City). The resolution would allow members of the General Assembly to serve an additional four years in the Legislature. This would be two additional terms in the House and one additional term in the Senate. During the bill presentation, the sponsor stated that term limits have caused

a significant loss of institutional knowledge within the capitol. No supporting or opposing testimony was provided.

- The House Workforce Development Committee convened Monday afternoon to discuss HB 2631, sponsored by Representative Jim Kalberloh (R-Lowry City). This bill suspends the pay of any elected official who orders the closure of a business to address health concerns outside of state law or guidance. The pay will be suspended for as long as the private business is closed. During the bill presentation, the sponsor stated his intent with the legislation is to slow down the process and force elected officials to really determine if forced closures are necessary. No supporting or opposing testimony was presented during the hearing.
- The Senate Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy and the Environment Committee met Wednesday morning to consider passage of SB 702, SB 651, SB 636, and SB 693, sponsored by Senator's Karla Eslinger (R-Wasalo), Bill Eigel (R-St. Charles), Bob Onder (R-Lake St. Louis), and Rick Brattin (R-Belton). All four bills include provisions prohibiting all public and private employers from requiring an employee or prospective employee to receive a vaccination against COVID-19 as a condition of commencing or continuing employment. SB 693, varies slightly and also includes additional provisions prohibiting political subdivisions from requiring a COVID-19 vaccination to access transportation systems, services, or public accommodations, and also prohibits student from being required, as a condition of school attendance or participation in school-sponsored extracurricular activities, to be immunized against COVID-19 or to undergo any testing policy as an alternative to a COVID-19 vaccination. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted to combine all provisions from the four bills into SB 702 creating one legislative vehicle. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 10-1 vote.
- The House Economic Development Committee convened Thursday morning to consider passage of HB 1860, sponsored by Representative J. Eggleston (R-Maysville). The bill is the House companion to SB 665, sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City) and 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 points that the unemployment rate rises above 5.5 percent, up to a maximum of 20 weeks if the unemployment rate goes above nine percent. After brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 6-3 vote.
- The Senate Small Business and Industry Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 876, sponsored by Senator Mike Bernskoetter (R-Jefferson City). The bill provides that any employer required to make contributions under the unemployment compensation laws shall pay an annual unemployment automation adjustment equal to .02% of its total taxable wages for the twelve-month period ending the preceding June 30th. The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and NFIB provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was provided.

Key Upcoming Dates

- March 8, 2022 – State of the Judiciary
- March 14-18, 2022– Legislative Spring Break
- 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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