

# LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF MISSOURI

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## LWV Legislative Bulletin April 15, 2019

*LWV members are encouraged to personally communicate, as individual voters (not as LWV members), with their legislators on the various legislative bills. Previous issues of the Legislative Bulletin can be found at this link: <https://lwvmissouri.org/legislative-bulletin/>*

### BUDGET

The Senate Appropriations Committee worked on the House operating budget bills, HBs 1-13 (Smith) this week. The committee completed an initial review and markup on HB 2, the K-12 education budget, and HB 3, the higher education budget on April 9.

The committee left open the key decisions on the K-12 school funding formula and aid to community colleges and public four-year institutions, while closing out many lesser items. The committee will continue to meet next week, cycling back through the bills to close out remaining open items and work on language.

### CLEAN MISSOURI AND REDISTRICTING

The Senate debated SS/SCS/SJR 13 (Holsman) on April 9 but did not bring the measure to a vote. The SS version of SJR 13 would make several changes regarding the legislature. The SS would reduce the size of the House from 163 to 136 members, revise term limits for legislators to any combination of terms of a total of sixteen years in the two chambers, grant legislators a CPI cost of living adjustment to legislative pay and exempt legislative work product from the state's Sunshine Law.

Sen. Onder offered SA 1 *to undo most of the redistricting reforms of Constitutional Amendment 1*, also known as CLEAN Missouri. The SJR was laid over on the Informal Calendar with the amendment pending.

*The amendment, if approved by voters, would eliminate the Nonpartisan State Demographer and rewrite the priorities for the redistricting process to reduce the priority of partisan fairness.*

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICS AND SUNSHINE LAW

The Senate Government Reform Committee heard HB 445 (Dogan) on April 9. The perfected bill limits lobbyist gifts to elected and appointed local officials, including lobbyist gifts to school board members and superintendents, incorporates revolving door policies and campaign contribution limits for local officials and changes the Sunshine law.

***The House adopted an amendment that weakens the state's open records law, also known as the Sunshine Law.*** HA 3 (Schroer) would amend the Sunshine Law with a broad exemption to allow all governmental officials to close any records pertaining to "constituent" communications regarding any request for information or assistance.

This provision is especially broad when applied to school board members. Since nearly all school board members are elected at-large, this amendment could allow school board members to close communications with any person in the district, since everyone in the district is a "constituent." HA 3 also allows an official to close any document received or prepared by or on behalf of the official and consisting of advice, opinions and recommendations in connection with decisions made by the public body.

## CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

The Senate appears likely to take up SS/SCS/SB 292 (Eigel) again within the next week. The Senate debated SS/SCS/SB 292 (Eigel) on April 2 for over eleven hours but did not bring the bill to a vote. The bill would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in other parts of the state. ***LWVMO opposes SS/SCS/SB 292. As noted in previous legislative bulletins, LWVMO is opposed due to positions established after a state study. It is time to remind your legislator that expansion of charter schools should not be attempted until revisions of their guidelines are made.***

## CONCEALED WEAPONS ON CAMPUS

The House gave final approval to HB 575 (Dohrman) on April 8 by a vote of 98-52. The bill would allow campuses to designate campus protection officers who are allowed to carry weapons on campus.

***The bill also takes away local control of college and university governing boards to regulate concealed weapons on campus and allow any person, including students and staff, with a concealed carry permit to carry concealed weapons on campus***

## APPROVAL OF TAX ISSUES

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HJR 19 (Christofanelli) on April 10. The HJR would require any state or local election to approve a new tax or increase an existing tax to occur on a general (November) election date.

***LWV opposes this limitation on the approval of local ballot issues. Municipal election dates are the usual time for local communities to focus on school board and school levy elections.***

## TRANSPORTATION BONDING

The Senate spent many hours debating SS/SCR 14 (Schatz) on April 9, and then approved a revised version on April 11. The SS#2 version of the SCR expresses support for issuance of bonds by the Highways and Transportation Commission to pay for construction and repair of 215 bridges on the state highway system, as selected by the Commission, not to exceed \$301,000,000. This resolution also expresses approval for debt service to be paid from future appropriations by the General Assembly from the General Revenue Fund beginning no earlier than FY 2021. The bonding would be contingent on the Commission receiving and accepting a federal grant for road and bridge purposes.

The following information, provided by the Missouri Budget Project, was also mentioned in our previous Legislative Bulletin.

## HB548 – SALES TAX ON ONLINE PURCHASES

HB548 Although certain provisions of House Committee Substitute for House Bill 548 (HB 548) would close an ongoing tax loophole, **the remainder of the bill would make Missouri’s tax structure more unfair for most Missourians, shortchange education funding, and jeopardize the resources our communities need to prosper. The bill would cost Missouri \$74 million in just the first full tax year of implementation.** This was placed on the House Informal Third Reading Calendar on April 11.

- **The House Committee Substitute for House Bill 548 (HB 548) would:**

Implement the components of the “Wayfair Fix,” allowing Missouri to collect sales taxes owed on online retail purchases just like the state does for purchases at local retailers.

- Endanger public services while directing an additional tax cut to Missouri’s wealthiest. The bill would cut the top rate of income tax by 0.14 in the first year of implementation, followed by additional reductions in the income tax rate that would be triggered by growth in sales tax revenue. The cost of the income tax reductions far outweigh the benefit of Wayfair.
- Shortchange pre-K to 12 education funding by diverting currently earmarked sales taxes for education. Earmarked sales taxes that would be collected under the “Wayfair Fix” would be designated as general revenue, reducing education funding over time as e-commerce grows.
- Limit the ability of cities and counties to collect taxes due for online retail purchases, even if those localities already have a “use tax.”

Our current budget situation is volatile, at best, and any changes in tax policy should help us meet current needs and not stop us from correcting issues when they arise. **House Bill 548 would make the volatility more severe.** Increases in General Revenue should be used to address current budget needs and not irresponsibly wasted on *new loopholes or giveaways*.

**Please contact House and Senate members and urge them to oppose this measure. Find your legislators at this link: <https://www.senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup/Default.aspx>**

**Ask that they oppose HB 548 and instead support a clean version of the “Wayfair Fix”** (See the Missouri Budget Project’s quick summary of the Wayfair Fix here: <http://www.mobudget.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Wayfair-Fact-Sheet-April-2019.pdf>)