



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

Published during the Missouri Legislative Session by the

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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This issue will introduce you to the second general session of the 98th General Assembly that convened on Wednesday, January 6, 2016. LWVMO and LWVUS positions guide us in selecting bills/issues to support or oppose.

According to the LWVUS “Impact on Issues,” the goals for setting priorities to guide the LWV advocacy work are to:

- (1) Enhance the League’s effectiveness by concentrating resources on priority issues;
- (2) Build the League’s credibility and visibility by projecting a focused and consistent image;
- (3) Ensure that the League has sufficient issue and political expertise to act knowledgeably; and
- (4) Enable the League to manage resources effectively.

In setting legislative priorities, the Board considers the following:

- (1) Opportunities for the League to make an impact;
- (2) Program decisions made at Convention and/or Conference
- (3) Member interest; and
- (4) Resources available to manage effectively.

The LWVMO legislative priorities were chosen based on member interest, timeliness and past legislative efforts. Legislative Action Committee members will be reporting on the progress of bills and other activities. We hope that this is not a “one-way” conversation and that you will inform yourself, respond to Action Alerts and help us support passage or defeat of legislation that will best serve all Missourians.

TO KEEP YOU UPDATED AND INFORMED, THE LWVMO LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN WILL BE COMING TO YOUR E-MAIL BOX ONCE OR TWICE MONTHLY.

IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE A COPY BY MAIL, PLEASE SEND \$10 TO:

LWV MISSOURI

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The League of Women Voters®, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active citizen participation in government, works to increase understanding of public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Members educate themselves on issues, lobby for causes for which the League has a position, and extend information to others through public forums, educational publications, coalitions, and public speaking. The League encourages communication with elected officials, and promotes citizen participation in the democratic process.

LWVMO Legislative Priorities 2016

The League of Women Voters of Missouri supports:

- Voting laws that encourage and protect all citizens' fundamental right to vote.
- Comprehensive health care and mental health.
- Funding of safe transportation; roads, bridges, and public transportation.
- Legislative actions that promote ethical and responsible government.
- Tax policies that provide financial stability and adequate funding for all state services.

In this framework we will continue to address education concerns, environmental issues, the alternatives to the death penalty, and other League positions when deemed necessary.

Capitol Action Day

On January 12, 2016 League members from Columbia, Moberly, and St. Louis, (braving the cold but no snow), met at the Capitol to hand deliver our 2016 Legislative Priority cards to the current 162 State Representatives and 32 State Senators. Additional cards were also distributed to the six State Executive Offices.

It was a wonderful opportunity to address our priorities, communicate with elected officials or their Legislative Assistants, and gain League recognition.

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

Mandatory Photo ID for Voting submitted by Nancy Copenhaver, Director

Legislation has been proposed again this year to require restrictive identification for voting. The bills are HB 1631 and SB 594, accompanied by proposed constitutional amendments SJR 53 and SJR 20. The constitutional amendment is necessary to change the constitution because of the Missouri Supreme Court ruling in 2006 that our Missouri Constitution has strong protections for the right to vote. A constitutional amendment proposed by the legislature does NOT need the Governor's signature to move to the vote of the people. The enabling legislation to require certain state-issued photo ID to vote DOES require the approval of the Governor, but both the House and Senate have enough votes to override this veto if the majority sticks together. The House has passed this legislation several times, but it has not cleared the Senate in the past.

Both chambers are moving very rapidly, with the House Elections hearing on January 12. Seven League members attended, two testified, all persons present to testify were opposed, and the committee then voted the bill out, sending it on its way to the House floor for quick action. The Senate Financial and Government Organizations and Elections Committee is scheduled to hear Sen. Kraus's Senate bills at 2:00 on January 19. League will send testimony reiterating our opposition to further restrictions on the right to vote.

Below is our testimony in the House. Marilyn McLeod testified as an individual also.

The League is strongly opposed to SJR20 and HJR53 and the enabling legislation SB594/HB 1631.

Let's deal with the real voting challenge--- encouraging all of our citizens to vote by making elections as accessible and efficient as possible.

Protecting the right to vote and making elections equally accessible and fair to all is the most important thing we can do to strengthen our democracy. This legislation creates barriers to those citizens who lack a state ID and would face difficulties to procure one. Those groups that this legislation claims it would protect through exemptions would actually be disenfranchised. The provisional ballots they would be forced to cast would not be counted unless other requirements were met, (coming back to the polls with required ID, having their signatures validated if skeptical election judges determined they did not match the election books, the election was not close, etc.).

The real photo ID problem that the legislature should deal with immediately is meeting federal requirements so that Missouri's drivers' licenses meet the TSA requirements following the 2-year emergency extension just granted.

This proposed legislation is not a prudent use of taxpayers' money. According to the Brennan Center it will take more than \$7 million to implement this legislation. Precious dollars are needed to fund essential services such as education, health care, and transportation. \$7 million plus dollars to deal with a voter fraud problem that has not been demonstrated to exist is a waste of tax dollars.

Missouri has serious challenges that it must meet with limited resources. Voter fraud is not one of them. Let's be part of the solution by dropping this legislation.

Ethics Bills on the Move

The Missouri House has been in session almost two weeks and four ethics bills have already cleared the committee process, been passed by the full House, and are ready for Senate action. The House is committed to passing some ethics legislation this session and is doing so by passing individual bills which do limited things, rather than one omnibus bill which can lose support when different legislators dislike different parts of the bill. The four bills ready for Senate action are:

HB 1452 (Hoskins) changes the filing deadline for personal financial disclosure reports [of legislators] from May 10 annually to January 15 and July 15 biannually.

HB 1575 (Rowden) requires officials to timely disclose lodging and travel expenses incurred by the official, the official's spouse, the official's family that are paid by a third person [read lobbyist] for expenses.

HB 1983 (Dogan) specifies that no statewide elected official or member of the General Assembly shall serve as a paid political consultant.

HB 2203 (Barnes) changes the laws regarding the investment of campaign funds, requiring them to be liquid and readily available for the specific and limited purposes allowed by law.

HB 1474 (Dugger) has been heard in committee but has not been passed out.

Another bill, HB 2165 (Rowden) requires persons becoming lobbyists to dissolve all candidate committees prior to assuming such role. It has been heard in committee but not yet voted out [reader will remember former legislators who left the General Assembly with hefty campaign accounts and became lobbyists]. Rep. Rowden has three other bills filed regarding ethics.

HB 2166 (Alferman) bans all gifts and meals from lobbyists except plaques for awards, meals when all members of the General Assembly and statewide officials are invited. This bill has passed the committee with amendments and headed to the House floor.

HB 2226 (Barnes) adds special executive branch appointees to the definition of public official [for the purpose of regulating lobbyist expenditures to them] has been passed by the committee with amendments and is ready for House action.

Several ethics bills have also been filed in the Senate. SB 643 (Onder) modifies numerous provisions relating to ethics, namely: a two-year cooling off period before members of the GA may become lobbyists; a public official who registers as a lobbyist shall dissolve committees and limits how those funds can be transferred; legislators vacating seat prior to expiration of term to accept appoint to a board or commission can't receive compensation until their elected term would expire; statewide elected officials and legislators—plus families, employees, staff—are prohibited from receiving anything of value from lobbyists. The committee has heard the bill but has not voted on it yet. Other bills filed include SB 807 and SB 808 (Schupp), SJR 16 (Schaaf), and SJR 27 (Holsman). We will take a look at these and others in later bulletins.

Health Care- Dianne Modrell, Chair

Senator McCaskill held hearings in Jefferson City regarding Opioid Abuse and MO HB1892 (Rehder) which would establish Drug Monitoring.

House Health Insurance Committee and Select Committee will be considering an Insurance Rate Review through HB1405 (White). Missouri is the only state in the union without rate review. The Insurance Committee will also consider HB1592 regarding the expansion of HMO's for MO HealthNet eligibles. Consumers would advocate for accessible services with a broad physician/hospital network.

SB608 (Sater) presents a higher copay for Emergency Room visits that are non-emergency and would include fees for missing provider appointments. Voted "do pass" from the Veteran's and Health Affairs Committee, SB579 (Schaaf) would require reporting of certain infectious diseases.

There is a TANF Waiver being discussed that could include crisis care for mental health in those ages 21-35. This could cover an additional 1-2000 young people through appropriations for the Department of Mental Health.

The following is provided by the Missouri Budget Project.

Behavioral Health Care Weakening

Although one in ten Missouri adults have a serious mental illness, 40 percent of those go without treatment.

- Yet Missouri cut state general revenue funding for mental health services by as much as 35 percent since 2009.
- Missouri's spending on public mental health services at \$99.40 per capita is well below the national average of \$119.62 per capita.
- Reimbursement rates for the Department of Mental Health's community providers have fallen far behind inflation, making it harder for providers to maintain proper staffing and services.
- If left untreated, serious mental illness can escalate and result in premature death, increased incarcerations, create burdens to county jails and law enforcement agencies, and increased costs for Missouri taxpayers.

Transportation- Gwen Moore, Director and Transportation Chair

Transportation is one of the hot topics for this session. At least 17 bills related to transportation have been filed.

Several bills include small and larger fuel tax increases (HB 1381, HB 1581, and SB 623). Safe transportation cannot be maintained at the current tax rate – one of the lowest in the nation. Yet, Missouri's old 1950's allocation system is also unsafe. Across the state, most of the critical bridges have the highest traffic. There are critical bridges which are the responsibility of both MoDOT and local governments in every area of the state.

There are 2 bills (HB 2032 and SJR 18) which would transfer maintenance of lettered highways to the counties – as most states do. HB 2032 would only take effect if a MO Constitution Amendment passes to increase gas taxes transferred to counties is doubled. This would also reduce funding to MoDOT. The passage of these bills is unlikely.

MoDOT has 3 times the road miles it has funding for. As noted by the chairman of MoDOT's commission, "Missouri built one of the largest state highway systems in the nation — one that is today larger than the systems of Iowa, Nebraska and Illinois combined."

Bad roads and bridges increase fatalities. The fatality rate on Missouri's non-interstate rural roads is nearly triple that on all other roads in the state – both state and locally owned roads.

None of these bills include the LWV 25+ year priority for transit. For 2016, the MO legislature appropriated only \$3 million for transit: elderly and handicapped; 3 urban areas; with only \$80,000 for rural transit statewide. Many states include 15-20% of fuel taxes for transit. The MO Constitution would need to be changed to permit this. The lack of public transit limits access to prenatal care, jobs, education, healthy food ... In some areas; infant mortality rates exceed that of Third World countries: St. Louis, Kansas City, Ripley, Texas, Pemiscot, Dunklin, Saline, and Butler counties among others.

It's time that the state of Missouri and the legislature looked into adequately funding all transportation. It's cheaper to fix-it-first than to wait until it crumbles.

Tax Policy – Nancy Copenhaver, Director and Tax Chair

One of our partners in monitoring legislation is the Missouri Budget Project. There is a weekly conference call to update folks on issues related to a number of items, often revenue/taxes, health care, and other issues. Mike Sutherland is the person who reported on revenue items on the January 15 call.

Currently there is no consensus revenue estimate for the fiscal 2017 year budget (the one the legislature will be passing this session). The consensus revenue estimate is that number that is agreed to by the Governor and the House and Senate Budget Committees. The figure being talked about currently is an increase in fiscal 2017 of 4.1%. This is the number the Governor is expected to use in his State of the State address on January 20. If this is the amount, budgeting will be very challenging this year. Many of the departments have submitted their budget proposals. DESE is asking for the Foundation Formula to be fully funded (an increase of \$500 million). Missouri HealthNet and new decisions amount to about \$350 million. Basically an increase of 4.1% would be an increase of about \$350 million in General Revenue. Thus we expect the budget to be under a lot of pressure.

Budget bills of restrictions in spending made by the Governor (from the 2016 budget) are showing up on the House calendar, putting them in position to be taken up to be considered for an override vote if needed..

Revenue bills heard this week included:

SB 623, proposing a 1 ½% increase in the gas tax and a 3 ½% increase in diesel tax was heard with many testifying in support. MBP predicts a tough way to go for this bill.

Sen. Schaeffer's bill, SB 575, to eliminate the earnings tax in St. Louis and Kansas City at the end of 2017 was heard as well, with an overflow crowd. There was much opposition, including the mayors of St. Louis and Kansas City, indicating the severe cutbacks in essential services that would result with this proposal. Both cities will be voting in April to renew these taxes. There were only two people testifying in favor, Woody Cozad and the Missouri Freedom Alliance.

Helpful information:

To find your state officials go to www.moga.mo.gov. Click on member look-up then follow prompts to either put in your mailing address or your 9 digit zip code.

PLEASE SAVE YOUR LEGISLATIVE BULLETINS TO USE FOR REFERENCE AS LEGISLATIVE TRACKING CONTINUES THROUGH THE 2016 SESSION.