



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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Along with the snow there has been a flurry of activities in the General Assembly these past two weeks. Several bills are on a fast track moving through the House or Senate.

The House gave final approval on February 19 to two measures, HJR 1 and HB 30. HJR 1 proposes a constitutional amendment specifying that a person seeking to vote in a public election may be required by general law to provide a valid government-issued photo identification. HB 30 is the enabling legislation. They were approved by a vote of 118 to 39 and 118 to 37 respectively and reported to the Senate and First Read. If passed, HJR 1 would need to be approved by the vote of the people in a general election. The Governor cannot veto a constitutional amendment. The League opposes both measures and will be watching movement in the Senate. Watch for another Action Alert.

Bills of interest to the League are two student transfer bills, HB 42 and SCS/SBs 1, 22, 49 and 70. The bills pertain to student transfer from unaccredited districts to accredited schools within the unaccredited district, and to accredited districts within the county or adjoining county. Each contains many provisions. SB 1 expands charter schools by allowing a full range of sponsors to sponsor charter schools in unaccredited and provisionally accredited districts and is currently on the Senate Informal Calendar for Perfection. HB 42 was approved by the House Select Committee on Education and may now be debated on the House floor.

Two ethic reforms bills have been introduced in the Senate, SB 11 and constitutional amendment SJR 13. They mainly pertain to reporting lobbyists gifts. SB 11 requires legislators to wait two years after leaving the legislature before coming lobbyists. This provision would not take effect until January, 2017 and would affect only legislators serving their first term. It also would prohibit legislators from working as paid political consultants for other legislators. SB 11 passed the Senate. SJR 13 was first read, but no further action has taken place.

Marty Ott, Legislative Action Chair

Health Care – Barbara Davis, Director and Health Care Chair

Since my last report it has been a busy time in the areas of budget/finances in the House. During the week of Feb.9-13 the House Appropriations finished the markups on appropriation bills. Tax cut bills are being filed and beginning review in the House and Senate.

Sen. Silvey has filed a Medicaid Expansion bill which would involve a federal block grant and which several senators have said they would consider. It creates a joint House/Senate committee to promulgate bills later and would create the block grant. Also being considered are bills commonly referred to as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) and SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

During the week of Feb. 16-20 there were committee meetings concerning physician rate increases (moved out of committee), raising asset limits for Medicaid recipients, direct pay primary care, and managed care in Medicaid. Discussion will continue on these issues and other items related to health care.

This is just the beginning of consideration about securing better health care for Missourians during this 2015 session of the legislature. Stay tuned for further developments!

Tax Policy – Nancy Copenhaver, Director and Tax Chair

GOOD: Two Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) bills were heard in the Senate Ways and Means Committee last week. They would benefit more than 500,000 families, lowering taxes for low- to moderate-income Missourians. SB 40 (LeVota) would create a state EITC which would encourage work, enhance take-home pay, improve health and economic outcomes, and have long-lasting benefits for more than 510,000 Missouri families. State EITC's have been adopted in 26 states, including many of Missouri's neighboring states. They have broad bipartisan support because of their many benefits for children and families.

The Committee also heard SB 25 (Sater) which would create an EITC for dependent children of up to \$300 per child, aimed to benefit low-to moderate-income Missourians. The proposal is aimed at helping people afford childcare cost and other necessities associated with raising kids. The amount of the tax credit authorized will vary depending on income level, with taxpayers with adjusted gross income of less than \$20,000 qualifying for the maximum \$300 and those make between \$20,000 and \$35,000 eligible for \$200 per child.

BAD: HJR 34, a proposed Constitutional amendment often referred to as TABOR was heard in the House Ways and Means Committee. It would limit general revenue growth to inflation plus population change and mandate tax rate reductions. League sent written testimony opposing this to the committee. This is the 11th year this bill has had a hearing but there doesn't seem to be a lot of support for it this year.

UGLY: Coming up this week the House Ways and Means Committee will hear HB 590 (Koenig) which would reduce the state's income tax and replace it with an increased and expanded sales tax. The hearing is scheduled for Tuesday evening at 5 p.m. The bill would increase taxes for low-and middle-income Missourians who spend a larger proportion of their income on essential goods and services. In addition, the bill would hurt Missouri businesses by encouraging Missouri customers to purchase from surrounding states to avoid the higher sales tax. League plans to be there to testify.

Please contact your representative and senator and express your opinion on this legislation. Many thanks to one of our partners, the Missouri Budget Project, for the timely and thorough information on these issues.

Death Penalty - Sydell Shayer

There have been nine bills on the death penalty introduced this legislative session, seven of them are consistent with the League's position to abolish the death penalty. The other two appear to be supportive of the death penalty.

The following three bills were listed in the last Legislative Bulletin.

HB 420 eliminates the death penalty.

HB 561 requires studies of previous death penalty studies and makes recommendations too prevent wrongful convictions. It also provides for a moratorium on the death penalty.

SB 240 requires the State Auditor to report on the cost of administering the death penalty in Missouri.

The above bills have been second read, are not on the calendar and no hearing has been set.

SB 393 (Jill Schupp) It establishes a Task Force on the Death Penalty and places a moratorium from August 28, 2015 until January 1, 2018. The task force should analyze issues relating to the state capital punishment system including the American Bar Association's 2012 Report. In addition, the task force must find ways to prevent wrongful convictions and promote fairness in the state's capital punishment system.

The bill received its first reading and is not on the calendar nor is a hearing scheduled.

SB 447 This act repeals the death penalty for first-degree murder. It also provides that any person sentence to death before August 28, 2015, must be sentenced to life imprisonment without parole. It creates the Death Penalty Reinvestment Fund. Its funds must provide for services to victims of crime, for violence prevention, and rehabilitation programs for children. The bill has been first read.

HB 837 (McGaugh) Requires the state Auditor to make a one-time report on the costs of administering the death penalty. Read Second Time.

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