

March 31, 2017



State Representative
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District 33
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Friends,

This week I was able to welcome the 2016 Class 4 state football champions from Harrisonville High School to the Capitol. It was an honor to meet these young people, pictured here, as well as their coaches. Coach Brent Maxwell was recently recognized by the Kansas City Chiefs as a Coach of the Year and Coach Tom Meerks who are phenomenal mentors for their teams.

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House Advances Legislation to Allow Missourians to Obtain REAL ID-Compliant Photo Identification (HB 151)

Legislation that would give Missourians the option to obtain photo identification that complies with the federal REAL ID Act is now on its way to the Senate. The bill approved by the House this week would require the state revenue department to issue Real ID-compliant driver's licenses and identification cards to those who want them.

Passed by the U.S. Congress in 2005, The REAL ID Act was designed to enhance security procedures by establishing new minimum standards for driver's licenses. Missouri responded to the requirements by passing a state law in 2009 to protect the private information of Missouri citizens by prohibiting the Missouri Department of Revenue from complying with the federal act. Because the state has not complied with the requirements, Missouri licenses are no longer a valid form of identification at federal facilities and military bases, and will no longer be valid at airports as proof of identity for domestic flights beginning in 2018.

For Missourians who do not want to comply with the REAL ID requirements because of privacy concerns, the legislation would allow them to request the existing style of Missouri identification that is not compliant with the federal act. For those who want or need the federally compliant driver's license, the bill would establish safeguards so that any additional data gathered is used only for purposes of issuing the identification.

Supporters say the bill is designed to provide a reasonable solution that will ensure Missourians aren't burdened with having to get alternative identifications to access federal facilities or to visit family members on military bases. They say the bill is about giving Missourians the freedom to decide whether to obtain identification that is compliant with REAL ID.

Opponents of the legislation say it's important to push back against the overreach of the federal government just as states did against the federal health care plan. They say the current president will do away with the REAL ID requirements and that Missourians should not worry about needing to obtain compliant identification in order to fly. Governor Greitens recently confirmed that he has spoken with President Trump's administration about the possibility of changing the federal REAL ID law so that current Missouri driver's licenses will meet federal requirements.

House Moves to Protect Alternatives to Abortion Agencies (HB 174)

The Missouri House has approved legislation meant to protect the rights of alternatives to abortion agencies to provide their services without government interference. The bill is a response to a St. Louis ordinance that was passed to prohibit discrimination based on a person's reproductive decisions or pregnancy. Supporters of HB 174 say the ordinance could prevent agencies and the individuals who work there from providing their resources and counseling to expectant mothers.

The bill approved this week would acknowledge the rights of alternatives to abortion agencies, including crisis pregnancy centers and maternity homes, to freely assemble and engage in religious practices or speech without government interference. The bill would prohibit local municipalities from enacting ordinances that restrict the rights of these agencies.

Supporters say the bill will protect the free speech rights of agencies, and prohibit political subdivisions from creating rules to prevent pregnancy centers and maternity homes from providing resources to expectant mothers.

Missouri's Alternatives to Abortion Program was created to assist women in carrying their unborn child to term instead of having an abortion, and to assist them in caring for their child or

placing their child for adoption. Services are available during pregnancy and for one year following birth.

Ethics Reform Bill Receives House Approval (HB 229)

The Missouri House has approved another ethics reform proposal – this one aimed at the influence lobbyists have on local elected officials. The legislation would bar gifts from lobbyists to local government officials, superintendents, school board members, members of charter school boards, and the staff and family members of such people.

Supporters say the proposal would extend to local elected officials the same ethical reforms the House has proposed for members of the legislature and statewide elected officials. The House approved the gift ban for state elected officials and sent it to the Senate in January.

As the sponsor told his colleagues while discussing the bill on the House floor, “It would simply bring local elected and appointed officials into the same standards that we’ve set for ourselves in terms of banning lobbyists’ gifts for them.”

The bill also clears up the definition of local government lobbyists, which the sponsor said is somewhat murky right now. “Not everyone who gives gifts to local government officials right now is required to register as a local government lobbyist, so this requires them to do that,” said the sponsor.

The bill originally extended its prohibitions only to governments and school districts with annual operating budgets of more than \$10 million. House members amended the bill to remove the cap.

House Approves Legislation to Better Prepare Missourians for the Workforce and Self-Sufficiency (HB 680)

The members of the Missouri House hope to give the approximately 500,000 Missourians without a high school diploma a second chance to obtain an education that will allow them to secure good-paying, family-supporting jobs. To accomplish this goal, legislation approved this week would establish four adult high schools in Missouri.

The legislation is modeled after a program in Indiana that was put in place to address the needs of adults without high school diplomas, and employers seeking a qualified workforce. The program has seen tremendous success as it has grown from four schools to 11. After the 2014 school year, 88 percent of students were employed or in college six months after graduation. Supporters hope to see a similar level of success in Missouri.

Supporters note that a high school diploma is a key component to giving Missourians an opportunity to obtain gainful employment. They point to Census Bureau statistics that indicate a high school diploma can increase a person’s lifetime earnings by as much as \$400,000. Proponents say a high school diploma is critical to empower people to move off of government assistance and toward self-sufficiency.

The bill would establish four adult high schools located in Southeast Missouri, St. Louis City, Mid-Missouri, and Southwest Missouri for individuals age 21 and up who do not have a high school diploma. It would give priority to Missourians who are currently on government assistance. The schools would help these individuals complete their high school education and obtain a diploma. They would also offer skills certifications based on regional demand through partnerships with community colleges and other programs. Additionally, they would offer a child care center to remove a significant barrier for many adults who would like to participate.

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House Passes Legislation to Create Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (HB 327)

Members of the Missouri House took action this week to help low-income seniors afford fresh produce from farmers' markets in the state. The House approved legislation to establish the Missouri Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program within the state Department of Health and Senior Services.

The department would utilize a federal grant from the USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) to provide low-income seniors at least 60 years of age or older with vouchers from county designated distribution sites that may be exchanged for eligible foods at farmers' markets, roadside stands, and community supported agricultural programs. The national program was established in 2001 as a USDA pilot program designed to improve low income seniors' diets. While Missouri has not participated in the program previously, in Fiscal Year 2015 SFMNP assisted more than 817,000 seniors across the country.

Supporters say that many seniors live on a fixed income and cannot afford fresh fruits and vegetables. According to the National Resource Center on Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Aging, 25 percent of older Americans have poor nutrition. The bill would help seniors afford fresh, nutritious produce from farmers' markets across the state.

Prevailing Wage Bill Heads to Senate (HB 104)

Members of the Missouri House approved legislation this week meant to make public construction projects more affordable for taxpayers. The bill would repeal Missouri's prevailing wage law to help reduce the cost of construction and maintenance projects for municipalities and school districts.

Missouri law currently requires contractors and subcontractors working on public works projects to pay employees the prevailing wage for the particular locality in which the project is being completed. While the state's minimum wage is \$7.70 per hour, prevailing wage requires significantly higher wages. For example, the prevailing wage in Boone County for carpenters working on public works projects is approximately \$25 per hour. In St. Louis and Kansas City, the prevailing wage is approximately \$37 an hour.

The bill approved by the House would change Missouri law to require contractors and subcontractors to pay employees state or federal minimum wage, whichever is higher. Contractors and subcontractors would be permitted to pay higher than the minimum wage, but that would not be a requirement.

Supporters of eliminating the prevailing wage say that it causes many public works projects to be too expensive. Communities and school districts are either forced to pay too much for needed construction or maintenance, or to forego the projects entirely. Proponents say removing the prevailing wage requirement will allow the state to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Those who oppose the bill say that prevailing wage laws secure public works projects against out-of-state contractors who will take work away from Missouri laborers. They note that in some areas contractors do not submit wage information, so the prevailing wage is then set for the union rate for that trade. Opponents say the prevailing wage in rural communities would fall to more affordable levels if local contractors in those areas would simply provide their wage information to the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

If both chambers approve the bill and the governor signs it into law, Missouri will join states such as Kentucky, West Virginia, and Indiana, which have all repealed their prevailing wage laws in recent years. Missouri is currently one of 29 states with a prevailing wage law in place.

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Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns about any of these pieces of legislation.

Warmest regards,

Donna