

May 19, 2017



State Representative
Donna Pfautsch
District 33
Serving parts of Cass, Jackson and Lafayette Counties

COMMITTEES
Chair, Consent and House Procedure
Insurance Policy
Health and Mental Health Policy
Innovation and Technology

Capitol Report

Rep. Donna Pfautsch
201 W. Capitol Ave., Suite 404B
Jefferson City, MO 65101
573-751-9766
donna.pfautsch@house.mo.gov

Friends,

As you may have heard in the news, the Missouri Legislature will be entering a Special Session the week of May 22 in Jefferson City, there we will focus on an important jobs bill that will bring approximately 500 shovel-ready jobs to the Bootheel. I was proud to support this legislation when it came to a vote on the House floor. Jobs in rural areas are vital to our state's economy.

This report will focus on issues that were passed during the Session that ended May 12, and I will have an update for you after the Special Session has convened.

This year lawmakers sent a smaller number of bills than normal to the governor. Those that did make it include many of the policy priorities that were laid out by the House Speaker during his Opening Day Address. This session, while approximately 75 bills made it across the finish line, the number includes important issues such as substantive labor reform, tort reform, and economic development measures that will help Missouri attract more jobs.

One of the major highlights of the 2017 session is a fiscally responsible state spending plan that makes a record level of investment in K-12 education by fully funding the Foundation Formula for the first time. It includes funding for the Early Childhood Education Quality Assurance Reporting pilot program that I have championed the last two years. The legislature was also able to get a Right-to-Work bill to the governor that will protect the rights of workers and encourage employers to set up shop in the state. The tort reform bills that made it through the legislative process will help put an end to frivolous lawsuits by putting new expert witness standards in place by strengthening Missouri's workplace discrimination standards. Another major accomplishment this year was the passage of legislation that will establish a regulatory framework for ride-sharing companies like Uber and Lyft so they can expand and add jobs throughout Missouri.

Additionally, I was able to include my language on political subdivision audits in Senate Bill 112. This language is an extension of HB 1418, which was signed into law last year and has already proven to be a valuable tool for the Auditor's Office to ensure accountability with your tax dollars.

May 19, 2017

Some of the other legislative priorities that received approval in the final week of session include:

Legislation Finalized to Allow REAL ID-Compliant Photo Identification (HB 151)

Missourians will soon have the option to obtain a driver's license that is compliant with the federal REAL ID Act. The legislation will require the state revenue department to issue REAL ID-compliant driver's licenses and identification cards to those who want them. Compliant licenses will be needed to do things like board airplanes and enter military bases and federal buildings.

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 of this law, current Missouri driver's licenses are not compliant with the federal standards and were set to no longer be valid at airports and federal facilities beginning in 2018.

Missourians will now have the option to obtain a federally compliant driver's license. The bill will also allow individuals with a non-compliant driver's license to obtain a compliant version at no additional cost. However, even with the change, it will take the Department of Revenue as long as two years to make the new REAL ID-compliant licenses available. In order to allow people to travel and access federal facilities, the state will seek a waiver from the federal government to allow existing identification to continue to work until the new IDs are attainable.

For Missourians who do not want to comply with the REAL ID requirements because of privacy concerns, the legislation will 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 will establish safeguards so that any additional data gathered is used only for purposes of issuing the identification. One provision would ensure the source documents to obtain an ID are stored on a server that is not connected to the Internet in order to prevent hacking of the database. The bill also includes criminal penalties for misuse or unlawful access of personal data.

House and Senate Agree to Create Blue Alert System to Protect Peace Officers (SB 34)

In an effort to ensure law enforcement officials quickly receive the information they need to apprehend individuals who injure or kill peace officers, the Missouri House and Senate have approved legislation to create a Blue Alert System. The bill is one of the priorities of Governor Eric Greitens.

Similar to the Amber and Silver Alert systems, the Blue Alert system would send out identifying information such as a physical description of the suspect and the suspect's vehicle. Twenty-seven states already have a similar system in place. Specifically, the bill would establish the Blue Alert System to aid in the identification, location, and apprehension of any individual or individuals suspected of killing or seriously injuring a local, state, or federal law enforcement officer. The bill would require the Department of Public Safety to coordinate with local law enforcement agencies and public commercial television and radio broadcasters to effectively implement the system.

Expanding Missouri's Job Training Efforts (HB 93)

The House and Senate have given final approval to legislation meant to provide a boost to the state's small businesses, including many in rural areas. The bill would expand the Missouri Works program so that more of the state's small businesses would be eligible for workforce training benefits.

May 19, 2017

In many areas of the state there are small businesses that do not qualify to obtain the benefits provided through Missouri Works, which is the state's number one incentive tool for business expansion and retention. These businesses fall short of the program's qualification criteria such as number of workers employed, or health insurance benefits provided. The bill would allow these businesses to pool together with businesses that do meet all of the program's criteria in order to receive benefits. Specifically, the bill would allow a group of businesses to qualify as long as the majority of them meet the program's criteria.

Legislation Approved to Establish Adult High Schools (HB 93)

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 during the final week of session will 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.

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.

Helping to Prevent Overdose Deaths (SB 501)

The General Assembly gave final approval this session to legislation meant to prevent overdose deaths.

The bill will give immunity from charges for minor possession of drugs or paraphernalia or being under the influence to a person who calls for emergency medical attention for someone who is overdosing on drugs or alcohol, and will give immunity to the person in need of medical attention.

The legislation has been referred to as "Bailey and Cody's law" in memory of two overdose victims whose parents believe that having such a law in place could have saved their children's lives. Supporters say the bill will help reduce the number of drug and alcohol related overdoses by eliminating the fear some would have of being prosecuted if they call for help for themselves or others.

Similar legislation has been enacted in other states and local areas and has proven to save lives, particularly when working in conjunction with bills that allow first responders or friends and loved ones to have and administer naloxone – a drug that counteracts overdoses to opioids, including heroin. Missouri in 2014 and 2016 enacted such laws.

Improving Transparency in the State Legal Expense Fund (SB 128)

The General Assembly gave final approval this session to legislation that will increase transparency when lawsuits against state agencies are settled. The legislation was prompted

May 19, 2017

by the revelation that millions of tax dollars were paid out over several years in settling harassment and discrimination cases against the Department of Corrections.

The cases against Corrections came to light late last year when an article on Pitch.com detailed several of them, and outlined how employees who complained about being harassed or discriminated against were victims of retaliation by fellow staff members. House members said after the article came out that they were unaware of the settlements because those have been paid out of a line in the budget that has no spending limit on it. That meant departments never had to come to the legislature and justify how much their settlement agreements were costing the state.

The legislation will require the attorney general to report every month to the legislature and others about how the state's legal expense fund – the fund from which money for settlements is taken – has been used. Missouri Attorney General Josh Hawley announced in March he would begin monthly reporting on the activity of the legal expense fund. Legislators praised his decision but said the bill passed this year is still needed to ensure future attorneys general will follow suit.

Ensuring Consistency with the State's Minimum Wage (HB 1194)

In response to a Missouri Supreme Court decision that invalidated part of Missouri's minimum wage law, lawmakers moved to implement a fix that will provide a consistent wage in municipalities throughout the state. The House and Senate approved legislation this session that will reaffirm that the state's minimum wage is applied throughout Missouri, and keep the decision to raise wages in the hands of the employer and employee.

While the state currently has a minimum wage that increases based on the Consumer Price Index, and is currently higher than the federal minimum wage, some municipalities have considered their own increases. St. Louis passed an ordinance to raise its minimum wage to \$10 an hour this year and \$11 an hour by 2018. The legislation approved by the House will preempt and nullify the minimum wage enacted by St. Louis, and provide that other municipalities cannot enact a minimum wage that exceeds the one established by state law.

The bill will ensure it is not illegal for an employer to hire someone in accordance with the state minimum wage, and if approved by the General Assembly will protect employers from being turned into criminals. A mandated increase in payroll would force businesses to either raise prices or cut costs by reducing the size of their workforce. In addition, it's important to have a consistent minimum wage across the state rather than an inconsistent patchwork of wages that vary from municipality to municipality.

Organ Donor Program Fund (SB 248)

In the final moments of the 2017 legislative session, lawmakers moved to support organ donation in Missouri by giving approval to a bill that would continue the organ donor program fund tax checkoff on state income tax returns. The checkoff is set to expire on December 31, 2017. The bill approved by the General Assembly would remove the sunset entirely and allow the checkoff to continue indefinitely. Supporters say the checkoff has been very successful, along with the driver's license donations, Employee Charitable Campaign, and direct donations in funding the Organ and Tissue Donor Program.

Warmest regards,

Donna