



January 28, 2023

## Capitol Report

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Hi,

Little did I know just how true my statement was last week about that being the last of our light load weeks, lol. The action started early this week with committees hearing bills on gutting the Initiative Petition process, limiting parents ability to make healthcare decisions for their child, and school open enrollment. The energy in the Capitol was absolutely electric with people coming from all over to voice their support or opposition for these topics. I can absolutely see how if one is not careful they could easily lose themselves in the swell of excitement and stress during such a week. I am making prioritizing my well being intentional to ensure I am able to represent you all to the best of my ability everyday.

Don't forget, this is an interactive process so I'd love to hear from you about what is contained here. If you agree or disagree with a course of action or legislation please feel free to respond and let me know. I am proud to represent you and want to hear your thoughts on these matters. Thanks for signing up for my reports!

Sincerely,



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## Topline News



### **Committee: Emerging Issues**

This week the Emerging Issues Committee heard bills aimed at restricting the ability of elected or appointed public officials to prevent a church from holding in-person meetings to worship. This measure is in response to Covid restrictions placed on organizations to protect the public from spreading illness. The Committee also heard a bill to expand the definition hospital to include smaller emergency and urgent care facilities in rural communities to allow for the ability of these facilities to qualify for available federal and state funding.

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### **Welcoming local officials to the House**

The House welcomed Mayor Quinton Lucas on Tuesday January 24. Mayor Lucas was in town to testify on bills relating to removing the state salary cap and age restriction on the position of Chief of Police as well as some officers salaries. The move would allow for the police department to set their own ranges for salary based on market data without having to petition the state legislature to make the changes needed. Mayor Lucas stuck around to testify on some other legislation as well, while he was in Jefferson City.

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## **This Week in Jefferson City**

### **House committee endorses gutting the initiative process**

On straight party-line votes, the House Elections and Elected Officials Committee on Jan. 26 voted to advance four proposed constitutional amendments that either seek to effectively gut the initiative petition process, make it more difficult to amend the Missouri Constitution or both. Majority Republicans supported the measures, while minority Democrats opposed them.

The initiative petition process empowers Missourians to propose and enact legislation independently of the legislature. In recent years, it successfully has been used to enact several issues the Republican-controlled General Assembly had long blocked, including Medicaid expansion, legislative ethics reform and legalizing medical and adult recreational marijuana use.

As result of being bypassed on these and other issues they oppose, Republicans have prioritized making it virtually impossible to enact laws or constitutional changes through the initiative. While some measures would raise the minimum number of signatures required for an initiative to qualify for the ballot, most would impose some kind of supermajority requirement for ratifying constitutional amendments, thus allowing a minority of voters to thwart the will of the majority.

The more straightforward of the proposals would require a two-thirds supermajority of votes cast for ratification. Others are more creative, with one requiring the support of both a simple majority of the statewide vote and majority approval in at least 82 of Missouri's 163 House Districts to effectively create a rural veto. Two proposals would require amendments to receive support from a simple majority of registered voters, rather than of votes cast, which would set such a high ratification threshold that nearly all ballot measures would fail – even those that somehow

managed to achieve 100 percent voter support.

Most of the supermajority requirements would apply only to amendments proposed by the initiative process, while those the legislature put on the ballot could still pass with a simple majority of votes cast. Any of the measures that clear the legislature automatically would go on the November 2024 ballot for voter ratification using the existing simple-majority threshold.

Because restricting or eliminating the initiative process likely isn't popular, the proposals include deceptive ballot language falsely telling voters they would allow only U.S. citizens to vote on ballot measures. However, the Missouri Constitution already restricts voting to citizens.

### **Senate panel considers eliminating corporate income tax**

On the heels of a \$2-billion-a-year individual income tax cut primarily benefiting the wealthy that's expected to put Missouri government on shaky financial ground within the next couple years, the Senate Economic Development and Tax Policy Committee on Jan. 24 heard legislation to completely eliminate the state's corporate income tax. Doing away with the tax is estimated to cost the state another \$712.14 million a year in lost revenue.

Missouri first enacted its corporate income tax, along with the state's individual income tax, in 1917. The corporate rate topped out at 6.25 percent in 1993 and remained at that level until a series of reductions over the last decade dropped it to the current rate of 4 percent. Starting in 2024, Senate Bill 93 would reduce the corporate rate by one percentage point each year until the tax was completely eliminated in 2027.

The committee also considered a proposed constitutional amendment, Senate Joint Resolution 3, to authorize the legislature to levy sales taxes on digital services, licenses and subscriptions. Such taxes currently are prohibited under an earlier constitutional amendment Missouri voters ratified in 2016 with 57 percent support. The committee took no immediate action on either SJR 3 or SB 93, both of which are sponsored by Republicans.

### **Republican bills heard to restrict transgender children, drag shows**

During a 10-hour hearing that stretched into the early morning hours of Jan. 25, the House General Laws Committee considered six Republican bills tightly restricting the rights of parents to determine the best course of medical care for their transgender child and limiting their participation in youth sports, along with two bills to criminalize drag performances. The bills are part of a national GOP push against LGBTQ rights.

The hearing was announced with just barely more than the 24-hour minimum public notice required by law. As has

happened in previous years, however, the tactic didn't work and transgender children, along with their parents and supporters, still flooded the Capitol to oppose the bills, far outnumbering the handful of bill proponents who showed up to testify.

Three of the bills seek to ban transgender children from participating in girls' sports, while another three would prohibit transgender children from receiving gender-affirming medical care. While the bill's sponsors said they are necessary to protect children, opponents said they would interfere with the ability of transgender children to live their lives authentically, jeopardizing both their physical and mental well-being.

The remaining two bills would make it a crime for someone to perform in front of children dressed as a member of the opposite sex – legislation that seems to ignore the long tradition of drag performances in mainstream, all-ages entertainment that includes several Shakespeare plays, comedian Milton Berle's 1950s variety show, the long-running TV series M\*A\*S\*H in the 1970s and the hit films Tootsie and Mrs. Doubtfire in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively.

The committee took no immediate action on any of the bills but is expected to advance at least some of the eight measures at a later hearing.

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Feel free to contact my office with your questions or requests.



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