



CAPITOL REPORT



I spent Saturday night celebrating some of Missouri's finest at the Missouri Cattlemen's Association's 56th Annual Missouri Cattle Industry Convention Banquet.

Hello All,

I hope this email finds you well. The legislative session is underway, and off to a strange start. Between weather issues and holidays, we haven't done much...

Last week's Emerging Issues Committee hearing on gender-affirming care and bathrooms lasted 8.5 hours, but I'm so proud of my Democratic colleagues on the committee for being such fierce advocates for medical and personal freedoms in the face of MASSIVE government overreach.

In much more exciting news, last week Missourians for Constitutional Freedom launched their campaign to restore reproductive rights in Missouri! See below for more information on how you can get involved.

Thanks for checking in. Please don't hesitate to reach out if there's anything I can do for you.

Take Care,

Legislative Update

HOUSE PANEL CONSIDERS PUBLIC SCHOOL OPEN ENROLLMENT

The House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee on Jan. 10 heard legislation that would authorize children to transfer to public school districts other than the one in which they reside. The committee took no immediate action on the bill.

Under [House Bill 1989](#), the open enrollment program would begin with the 2025-2026 school year. As currently written, while districts largely couldn't stop students from transferring, participation would be voluntary among receiving districts. However, skeptics of the legislation are concerned that if open enrollment becomes law, the voluntary nature of the program wouldn't long last as lawmakers would be under pressure to require districts to accept transfers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE HEARS BILL TO FURTHER WEAKEN STATE GUN LAWS

The House General Laws Committee on Jan. 9 heard Republican legislation that would further weaken Missouri's already lax gun laws to allow **firearms to be carried on mass transit** and in churches, expand conceal-carry rights to 18-year-olds and **restore conceal-carry rights to people who pleaded guilty to certain crimes, including violent misdemeanors**. All of those proposals have cleared the House of Representatives in recent years in various forms but failed to win Senate approval.

Under existing law, concealed weapons are prohibited on public buses and light rail, and also in houses of worship without the permission of church officials. [House Bill 1708](#) would lift those prohibitions for people with a conceal-carry permit, although the bill's sponsor said church leaders could still bar

ASHCROFT THREATENS TO KEEP PRESIDENT BIDEN OFF MO BALLOT

Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft said in a Jan. 6 social media post that Missouri and other Republican-led states should keep President Joe Biden off the ballot this year if the U.S. Supreme Court rules former President Donald Trump is ineligible to again seek the office under the Insurrection Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Ashcroft, a Republican, cited no legal justification for excluding Biden, a Democrat, from the ballot this November and lacks the authority under state law to do so even if there was one.

As secretary of state, Ashcroft oversees elections in the state but **has no authority to unilaterally remove a candidate from the ballot**. In fact, as the [Missouri Independent](#) noted in a Jan. 11 story, the Missouri Court of Appeals Western District ruled in 2014 that secretary of state can't even strike a candidate from the ballot who isn't legally qualified to run for office unless a court first orders the removal.

STATE GENERAL REVENUE DOWN 1.7 PERCENT IN FIRST HALF OF FY 24

Year-to-date net state general revenue collections decreased 1.7 percent through the first half of the 2024 fiscal year, going from \$6.24 billion last year to \$6.13 billion this year. Collections had been down 2.2 percent through the first five months of the fiscal year.

Net general revenue collections in December 2024 increased 0.6 percent compared to those for December 2022, going from \$1.08 billion last year to \$1.09 billion this year. The continuing decline in individual and corporate income taxes resulting from significant tax cuts enacted by the Republican-controlled

guns on church property by posting a sign declaring that weapons aren't allowed. Firearms would still be prohibited on Amtrak trains.

The committee also heard separate legislation, House Bill 2291, that would exempt guns and ammunition from all state and local sales taxes. Democrats on the panel noted that under the bill necessities like **food would still be taxed but weapons and ammunition would not.** The bill's fiscal estimate says it would cost the state about \$31 million a year in lost revenue and local governments up to \$65.4 million annually. The committee took no immediate action on either HB 2291 or HB 1708.

HOUSE PANEL HEARS SEVEN BILLS TARGETING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE

Transgender people would legally cease to exist under legislation a House committee considered Jan. 17 that would statutorily define someone as "male" or "female" based on their reproductive system at birth. The measure, [House Bill 2309](#), also would define additional terms in law such as "man," "woman," "girl," "boy," "mother" and "father" in ways that would exclude legal recognition of the gender identity of transgender people.

The bill was one of seven measures variously targeting transgender people that the House Emerging Issues Committee considered a part of a marathon hearing lasting nearly nine hours. The committee took no immediate action on any of the bills.

This year's effort by majority Republicans follows up on a pair of bills enacted into law last year that separately ban minors from receiving most gender-affirming care and

legislature was largely responsible for the anemic collections in December.

SENATE BILL SEEKS TO STRIP LOCAL CONTROL OF ST. LOUIS POLICE

A Senate committee on Jan. 17 heard legislation seeking to restore state control of the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. The state oversaw the department for more than 150 years until Missouri voters reinstated local authority more than a decade ago.

Under [Senate Bill 808](#), a state-controlled board would again run the department. Although city taxpayers would continue to be responsible for funding the department, they would have no say through their local elected representatives in how it operates.

While supporters of state control say it would stem violent crime, there is **no evidence** it would have an impact. When the state previously controlled the St. Louis police, there were several periods when crime was far worse than it is today. In fact, after a spike in crime during and following the pandemic that was common in large cities nationwide, violent crime has declined in St. Louis. By contrast, Kansas City, whose police department is state controlled, had a record-high number of homicides in 2023.

Opponents of the bill noted violent crime increased throughout Missouri after majority Republicans enacted laws weakening the state's gun laws. Especially given the racist origins of the original state takeover of the St. Louis police, the current effort is also drawing criticism since the largely white Republican legislative majority is seeking to take control of a key municipal function in a city with a Black mayor and population that is nearly half

prohibit transgender athletes from competing on school sports teams that correspond with their gender identity. As part of a compromise brokered to overcome a filibuster by Senate Democrats, both measures are set to expire in 2027. However, one of the new bills heard by Emerging Issues would eliminate the sunset on the gender-affirming care ban, thus making the restrictions permanent.

Three of the other bills would restrict which public restrooms transgender people would be allowed to use, leaving the choice legally unclear for some. The final measure would prohibit medical providers from being required to perform gender reassignment surgeries or other gender-affirming care, although **no evidence** was offered that this has ever happened in Missouri.

SENATE COMMITTEE ADVANCES MEDICAID PROVIDER TAX RENEWAL

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Jan. 18 a voted 12-1 to advance legislation renewing a key funding mechanism for Missouri's Medicaid program that must pass this year to avoid substantial cuts. However, the chamber's **hardline conservative faction has indicated its intent to block the bill** when it comes up for Senate debate unless unrelated language is added attempting to defund Planned Parenthood, which provides women's health care services in Missouri and abortions in other states.

Missouri health care providers voluntarily pay the tax, known as the Federal Reimbursement Allowance, because it allows the state to leverage substantially more federal Medicaid dollars. The tax provides about \$4.3 billion a year, roughly a third of the funding for Missouri's program.

Black.

HOUSE COMMITTEE CONSIDERS ANOTHER BIG HIKE IN LICENSE FEES

The House Transportation Infrastructure Committee on Jan. 17 heard legislation that would impose a 50 percent increase in the fee the private contractors that run the state's license offices charge Missourians for obtaining or renewing driver's licenses or vehicle plates. The proposed hike comes just five years after lawmakers doubled the fee.

The contractors use the fee to cover their operating expenses and earn a profit. [House Bill 1768](#) would increase the fee for two-year license plates or a six-year driver's license from \$12 to \$18. This fee is in addition to the actual cost of the plates or license, the revenue from which goes to the state and would not increase under the bill.

Until recent years, **lawmakers typically renewed the FRA without controversy.** That changed in 2021 when the hardline faction successfully prevented the last renewal bill from passing during the regular session, forcing last-minute action in a subsequent special legislative to prevent an interruption in the tax. The current measure, [Senate Bill 748](#), would permanently renew the tax, avoiding the need for future renewal fights.

Missourians For Constitutional Freedom



MISSOURI COALITION LAUNCHES PETITION TO RESTORE REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Missourians for Constitutional Freedom is a statewide coalition working to restore the right to reproductive health care in the state. In order to do so, the coalition needs to collect 172,000 valid signatures by May 5, 2024. To help donate, volunteer and sign the petition, [click here](#).

Since the 2022 trigger ban, **Missouri does not allow for abortions, including in cases of rape and incest.** As a consequence, women with pregnancy complications are being turned away or having their care delayed because physicians fear legal prosecution. Republicans have vowed to make it harder for Missourians to amend the constitution through the initiative petition process. In recent elections, Missouri voters have used the process to pass minimum wage increase, Medicaid expansion, and marijuana legalization, which all have been opposed by the Republican Party.

Community Events



EAST COAST SWING DANCE CLASS

Learn a few basic steps of East Coast Swing plus a few ways to leave the rules behind and play along with the music. The class will involve partner dancing, but a dance partner is not required to attend. Socks or slick-soled shoes recommended.

- Saturday, January 27, 2024
- 3:00 - 4:00 pm
- Green Hills Community Room 1 and 2

[Click here to register](#)

Health and Wellness

STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM (SLRP)

Applications accepted
January 1 to March 1, 2024

Awards up to \$60,000

Contact us

✉ DHSS.LoanRepayment@health.mo.gov

☎ 573-751-6441

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & SENIOR SERVICES

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The Student Loan Repayment Program (SLRP) awards funding for educational loan

repayment to qualifying Missouri practicing primary care physicians, psychiatrists and general practice dentists in exchange for service in a Missouri health professional shortage area.

Does this sound like you? Apply before March 1!

For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Resources

CONSTITUENT SERVICES

- [Apply for Medicaid](#)
- [Unclaimed Property](#)
- [IRS Free File: Do your Taxes for Free](#)
- [Missouri Housing Resources](#)
- [Report a Road Concern](#)

HEALTH SERVICES

- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [Trans Lifeline](#)
- [The Eldercare Locator](#)
- [Opioid Treatment Program Directory](#)
- [Place Your Order for Free At-Home COVID-19 Tests](#)

FOOD PANTRIES

- [Northland Assistance Center](#)
- [St. James Lutheran Church](#)

WEATHER SHELTERS

- [Cooling Centers](#)
- [Crisis Cold Weather Shelters](#)

PLATTE COUNTY LIBRARIES

- [Green Hills Library Center](#)
- [Parkville](#)
- [Riverside](#)