



February 23

Capitol Report



Dear All,

This week, in the aftermath of the tragedy that occurred during the Super Bowl Rally, and after hearing your calls and reading your emails, it has become clearer than ever that more needs to be done to prevent firearm violence of all types in our communities. I have introduced two bills and a House Joint Resolution to empower local municipalities and

counties to address the safety issues they face uniquely. These include provisions that allow local governments to adopt ordinances, orders or regulations that implement behavioral interventions to address public safety in line with their specific needs and priorities. At the end of the day, we know the communities across this state are unique in their strengths and the challenges they face, minors possessing firearms may be fine with proper training in a rural area but in the urban core minors having access to firearms without the proper training and reverence has proven deadly. By working together and taking a proactive approach to public safety, we can create a safer and more secure future for ourselves and our loved ones. No one knows our communities better than the individuals who live in them, allowing them to make their own choices is common sense. I'm ready to answer the call to help protect all communities in this state.

Sincerely,




Jamie J. Johnson

State Representative - District 12

201 West Capitol Avenue
Room 103-BA
Jefferson City MO 65101
573-751-9760
Jamie.Johnson@house.mo.gov

REP. JAMIE JOHNSON

Kansas City

2023-24 COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

- Administration and Accounts
- Consent and House Procedure, Ranking Minority Member
- Emerging Issues
- Special Committee on Government Accountability
- Special Committee on Property Tax Reform



This Week In Jefferson City

Senate approves initiative petition legislation

The Missouri Senate on Feb. 22 voted 22-9 to pass Senate Joint Resolution 74 intended to require approval in five of Missouri's eight congressional districts for approval for initiative petitions.

Such a concurrent majority requirement could lead to situations in which a measure overwhelmingly wins statewide with strong support in highly populated areas but still fails because of narrow losses in smaller districts. A mathematical analysis of an earlier version of SJR 74 published Feb. 5 by the Missouri Independent showed as few as 20 percent of voters statewide could defeat an amendment supported by the other 80 percent.

Before being removed, SJR 74 included prohibiting using the initiative petition process to propose constitutional changes allowing public officials to receive gifts from lobbyists, increasing taxes on food or property, or reducing law enforcement funding. Other provisions purported to prohibit non-citizens from voting on constitutional amendments, which already isn't allowed, and sought to bar foreign governments from sponsoring or supporting initiative petitions, which there is no indication has ever happened.

Senate Democrats filibustered SJR 74 over four days, including an overnight run lasting about 20 straight hours. They ultimately agreed to stand down if the controversial language was removed and straightforward ballot language accurately describing its purpose added. Those changes were made on an 18-12 vote. If it clears the legislature, SJR 74 automatically would go on the Nov. 5 statewide ballot.

House advances additional initiative petition legislation

The House of Representatives on Feb. 22 sent legislation to the Senate that would impose a host of procedural restrictions on the collection of initiative petition signatures. The action came on a straight party-line vote of 104-41, with Republicans in support and Democrats opposed.

House Bill 1749's provisions include specifying the font size and type that must be used on petitions, as well as the color of ink people must use when signing. The bill also says only Missouri residents and U.S. citizens can gather petition signatures and that petition gatherers can't be paid based on the number of signatures collected. In addition, the measure would require petition signatures to be invalidated if a court rewrites ballot language prepared by the Secretary of State's Office for being misleading.

Under decades-old Missouri Supreme Court precedent relating to initiative petitions, most recently expressed in the 2022 case *No Bans on Choice, et al., v. John R. Ashcroft*, the legislature cannot "use procedural formalities to interfere with or impede this constitutional

right that is so integral to Missouri's democratic system of government." As a result, the validity of several. HB 1749 provisions is questionable

Omnibus judiciary bill to be reconsidered after initial disapproval

The House of Representatives on Feb. 19 voted to reject an omnibus bill seeking to make a slew of changes to state judicial proceedings. However, three days later the chamber agreed to send the bill back to committee to have several provisions lawmakers found objectionable removed.

House Bill 1886 was defeated on a vote of 58-85, with 12 lawmakers voting "present." The House then voted 131-5, with five "present" votes, on Feb. 22 to reconsider the earlier vote and recommit the bill to the House Judiciary Committee for revisions.

A group of lawmakers opposed it largely due to a provision that sought to eliminate mandatory background checks for people seeking appointment as guardian or conservator of a grandchild. Lawmakers with experience in social work noted such checks can reveal that a grandparent is unfit for the role due to past abuse allegations, criminal history or other factors.

The bill's sponsor said the provision on background checks will be removed, with several others also being either deleted or modified. Once the committee makes changes, the bill will return to the House for further debate.

Subcommittee Chairman Seeks to Address Slot Machines

A committee chairman on Feb. 21 addressed advertising on unlicensed video lottery terminals that the Missouri Gaming Commission and State Highway Patrol considers to be illegal slot machines.

Rep. Scott Cupps, raised the issue during a hearing of the General Administration Appropriations Subcommittee, which he chairs. Cupps showed photos of advertisements on several VLTs that feature the state Treasurer's name under the official state seal and promote the treasurer's unclaimed property program.

Cupps said the ads create the appearance the state of Missouri endorses the machines. Cupps said he asked the treasurer, Vivek Malek, to testify at the hearing, but he declined.

VLTs have proliferated throughout the state in recent years and can commonly be found in gas stations, bars and other places. The highway patrol has seized and destroyed VLTs in counties where prosecutors have been willing to file charges. However, prosecutors in some counties are less certain the machines violate state law and have declined to pursue cases against them.

Scholarship Opportunity

Deadline:
March 22,
2024

Women Legislators of
Missouri Caucus

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Women Legislators of Missouri Caucus is excited to be offering 16, \$1000 college scholarships to young women across the state of Missouri that are hoping to continue their academic career by attending college. Interested students can apply at <http://bit.ly/molegwomen>



SCHOLARSHIP DETAILS

- \$1000 Scholarship
- Recognition Ceremony at Missouri State Capitol

REQUIREMENTS:

- Female, Missouri resident
- 2024 graduating senior
- 500-word essay
- Excellence in leadership, academics, and community service

Scan the QR code for the application



Interested students can
apply at
<http://bit.ly/molegwomen>

CONTACT US

Representative Johnson 573-751-9760
Representative Gallick 573-751-1344

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

573-751-9760



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