



CAPITOL REPORT

February 6, 2024



We're wearing Red on Tuesday for American Heart Month!

Hello All,

I hope this email finds you well. Legislation is finally moving on our side of the building—unfortunately that means **Open Enrollment passed out of the House last week**. This is a measure our Northland school districts adamantly oppose, and I will continue to voice my opposition on their behalf.

In good news, one of my priority bills is receiving a public hearing this Wednesday in the Emerging Issues Committee. [HB2402](#) allows a judge to finalize a divorce or grant a legal separation even if one partner is pregnant. The hearing will be held Wednesday at 4PM. You can [read more here](#) and [submit online testimony here](#).

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

Take Care,

Representative Ashley Aune
District 14 | (573) 751-3618

Legislative Update

GOVERNOR PROPOSES \$51.82 BILLION STATE OPERATING BUDGET

In his sixth and final State of the State address, Gov. Mike [Parson](#) proposed a \$51.82 billion state operating budget for the upcoming 2025 fiscal year, plus another \$898 million for capital improvement projects. As is tradition, Parson delivered the speech before a joint legislative session in the Missouri House of Representatives.

The FY 2025 spending plan includes an additional \$120.6 million in basic state funding for local K-12 public school districts, plus an additional \$14 million for districts' student transportation costs. Both increases would fund those budget lines at the minimum amounts called for by state law. Parson also asked for \$51.7 million in state child care subsidies.

Parson devoted most of the speech to claiming victory for what he sees as his administration' accomplishments since he took office in June 2018 after his predecessor resigned in disgrace. Those included **eliminating abortion rights, cutting income taxes for the wealthy, consistently funding K-12 schools at the minimum levels** set by state law and working through a large backlog of clemency requests – after taking no action on them during his early years in office.

SENATE GOP HARDLINERS PUNISHED FOR UNRELENTING OBSTRUCTION

Senate President Pro Tem Caleb [Rowden](#) on Jan. 23 retaliated against four members of the chamber's hardline right-wing faction for their constant obstruction of proceedings by stripping them of their committee leadership posts. The hardliners responded by spending

STATE AUDITOR ACCUSES ASHCROFT OF VIOLATING STATE LAW

State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick issued a [report](#) on Jan. 22 accusing Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft of **violating the law** by refusing to provide information to auditors on implementation of a new statute relating to cyber security reviews of local election authorities.

Under the law in question, which the legislature enacted last year, the Secretary of State's Office is required to perform cyber security reviews of Missouri's 116 local election authorities. A separate state law grants the State Auditor's Office access to all records of agencies subject to an audit.

The audit also criticized Ashcroft for withdrawing Missouri from its membership in the Electronic Registration Information Center, saying the **move cuts off local election officials from information necessary to identify and correct inaccurate voter registration records without providing an alternative to obtaining that information**. In his response, Ashcroft said the benefits of ERIC, which Missouri joined in 2018, were less than expected.

COMMITTEE ADVANCES BILL TARGETING TRANSGENDER HEALTH CARE

The House Emerging Issues Committee on Jan. 24 voted to advance legislation that would repeal the scheduled sunset of a law enacted last year that bans minors from receiving most gender-affirming care. The ban on gender affirming care currently is set to expire in 2027. The sunset provision was included in last year's bill as part of a compromise brokered to overcome a filibuster

most of the rest of the week engaging in more obstruction. by Senate Democrats.

The hardline Republican faction has long been a thorn in the side of Senate GOP leadership, with its obstructionist tactics sharply reducing the number of bills to win final legislative passage in each of the three previous years. From the outset of the current session, the hardliners have significantly escalated tensions by blocking the Senate from considering even routine business, finally prompting Rowden, R-Columbia, to take punitive action.

At a news conference, Rowden announced he had stripped committee chairmanships or vice-chairmanships from state Sens. Bill Eigel of St. Charles, Denny Hoskins of Warrensburg, Andrew Koenig of Manchester and Rick Brattin of Harrisonville. Hoskins also lost his position on the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee. Rowden was flanked by the more mainstream Senate Republicans during the announcement.

COURT SAYS PART OF CHALLENGE TO POLICE RIGHTS LAW CAN ADVANCE

The Missouri Supreme Court on Jan. 30 ruled St. Louis city's legal claim that a 2021 state law creating a so-called "law enforcement officers' bill of rights" **imposes an unconstitutional unfunded state mandate on local governments** can proceed. However, the court rejected the city's various other constitutional challenges to the law, which sets tight restrictions on investigations of police misconduct and grants special legal protections to officers accused of wrongdoing.

The measure, House Bill 2019 & 2020, also would **prohibit medical providers from being required to perform gender reassignment surgeries or other gender-affirming care**, although **no evidence** has been offered that this has ever happened in Missouri.

The committee, however, took no action on related legislation it heard the prior week that seeks to legally erase the existence of transgender people by statutorily defining someone as "male" or "female" based on their reproductive system at birth. Also not advancing, at least for now, are bills seeking to restrict which public restrooms transgender people could legally use.

SENATE PANEL ADVANCES NEW HURDLES TO CHANGING CONSTITUTION

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee on Jan. 30 approved legislation seeking to **eliminate the doctrine of "one-person, one-vote"** when ratifying amendments to the Missouri Constitution and essentially create a minority veto of many proposals that receive majority support statewide. The full Senate is expected to debate the measure in the coming days.

Since the adoption of the first Missouri Constitution in 1820, ratification of constitutional amendments has always required just a simple majority of votes cast statewide. [Senate Joint Resolution 74](#) would require future constitutional amendments to win both a statewide majority and also majorities in at least 82 of Missouri's 163

Missouri was one of several Republican-controlled states that moved to further **shield police from facing consequences for questionable or unlawful actions** as part of a conservative backlash to nationwide protests calling for law enforcement reform after the 2020 murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Missouri's protections for officers were enacted as part of [Senate Bill 26](#).

Once the trial judge makes a determination on whether SB 26 imposes an unfunded mandate, another appeal to the Supreme Court is expected. The case is *City of St. Louis v. State of Missouri*.

HOUSE NARROWLY PASSES PUBLIC SCHOOL OPEN ENROLLMENT

The House of Representatives on Jan. 31 voted 86-73 in favor of legislation that would allow Missouri students to attend any public school willing to take them, without regard to where a student lives. The bill, which passed with just four more "yes" votes than the minimum required for a House majority, now advances to the Senate.

Missouri students typically must attend the public school district in which they reside. [House Bill 1989](#) would authorize so-called "open enrollment" that would allow K-12 students to transfer to other districts. As currently written, however, it would be up to each of Missouri's 518 school districts to decide whether to accept kids from other districts and wouldn't force districts to take more outside students than they have capacity for. **Districts would have no**

state House districts.

Republican lawmakers for years have sought to make amending the Missouri Constitution harder after voters passed several high-profile ballot initiatives on issues the GOP majority had blocked in the legislature, including Medicaid expansion, bolstering legislative ethics requirements and authorizing both medical and recreational marijuana use. The issue has taken on added urgency for Republicans this year with an initiative petition currently being circulated to put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot to restore abortion rights in the state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION

The House Special Committee on Education Reform on Jan. 29 approved legislation that would allow charter schools to expand to St. Louis and St. Charles counties, as well as in the Columbia School District. The panel advanced the bill to the full House of Representatives on a vote of 7-2 with one committee member voting "present."

Charter schools are independent public schools that are **exempt from many of the state regulations** traditional public school districts must follow. Under existing law, they are only authorized to operate within the Kansas City of St. Louis city school districts. Although touted as an alternative to struggling local schools, charters have produced decidedly mixed results in Missouri, with some achieving academic success but most performing no better or even worse than their home district.

authority to stop students from leaving for other districts.

Open enrollment supporters say it would give students and their families more educational options within the public school context.

Opponents are concerned it would force local school districts, particularly smaller ones in rural areas, to consolidate if students leave for districts with greater resources.

Most majority Republicans, but only one Democrat, voted for HB 1989, while 26 Republicans broke with their party to join Democrats in opposing it.

Although advocates have long pushed to expand charter schools statewide, there has been little political will among rural lawmakers to do so. [House Bill 1485](#) would take a more incremental approach by expanding charters to two high-population counties in the St. Louis area, plus authorizing them in outstate Missouri for the first time, but on a limited basis, by including Columbia.

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



SONGS OF THE BLACK PIONEERS

Hear original songs from storyteller Brother John. His performance will explore the remarkable contributions of African American pioneers such as astronaut Dr. Mae Jemison, champion bicycle racer Marshall "Major" Thomas, and more.

- Saturday, February 24, 2024
- 10:30 am - 11:30 am
- Green Hills Community Room 1 and 2

[Click here to register](#)

Health and Wellness

MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION



PLATTE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Mark your calendar! We're partnering with [Harvesters - The Community Food Network](#) to host a Mobile Food Distribution. The event will take place Thursday, Feb. 8 from 1 to 2:30 p.m. at the Platte County Health Department. Anyone is welcome and no proof of need is required. Food can also be picked up for other people. Learn more: <http://tinyurl.com/4r3arzpm>

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 DISTRIBUTION

- [Northland Assistance Center](#)
- [St. James Lutheran Church](#)
- [Platte County Health Department](#)

WEATHER SHELTERS

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

PLATTE COUNTY LIBRARIES

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

