

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

TO: MAPA

FROM: John E. Bardgett, Jr.

DATE: January 30, 2014

RE: Legislative Activity – Week 4
January 27-30, 2014

It was a very busy week in the state's capitol this week, with numerous hearings on bills in both House and Senate committees. The House and the Senate began debating bills on the floor for the first time this session.

How well do you know the State of Missouri?

The trivia question for this week ... *What is the State Tree?*

The answer can be found at the end of the report.

Right to Work

This continues to be a hotly discussed issue both in committee and in the halls of the Capitol.

There was no action on any bill in the House Workforce Development Committee, however, we expect there will be a vote on these bills in the next two weeks.

Student Transfer

This week the Senate Education Committee heard another bill dealing with the student transfer issue, SB 493 – sponsored by Sen. Pearce (R – Warrensburg), the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee. Last week the committee heard several bills from St. Louis area Senators that would attempt to fix the transfer laws. SB 493 would require the state Board of Education to go into provisionally accredited or unaccredited districts to evaluate the accreditation status of each school building. The bill also establishes a statewide achievement school district -- run by a governor-appointed board -- to oversee struggling schools. This differs from other bills brought forth this session, which would have individual school buildings within unaccredited districts evaluated and give students the option to go to an accredited school in their home district. Sen. Pearce told the committee he plans to hear all the bills dealing with the transfer issue before moving a bill out of committee.

Income Tax Cut Bill in House

HB 1253 – sponsored by Rep. Berry (R – Kearney) is a comprehensive tax cut bill, dubbed the “Broad-Based Tax Relief of 2014.” This bill was heard in the House Ways and Means Committee last week. On Tuesday, January 28th the House Ways and Means Committee voted the bill out “do pass.” A House Committee Substitute (HCS) for HB 1253 was voted out of the House Ways & Means Committee on Tuesday, January 28th and now goes to the House Rules Committee for approval before debate by the full House of Representatives. Here is a link to the HCS bill text: <http://www.house.mo.gov/billtracking/bills141/biltxt/commit/HB1253C.htm> Similar legislation is also moving through the Senate. Last week the Senate Ways and Means Committee voted out a Senate Committee Substitute (SCS) for SB 509 & 496 – sponsored by Senators Kraus and Schmitt respectively. The bill is now on the Senate calendar awaiting debate by the full Senate.

Transportation Funding

SJR 48 – introduced by Sen. Kehoe (R – Jefferson City) would impose a temporary one-cent sales and use tax for transportation needs if approved by voters. A similar proposal, HJR 68 – sponsored by Rep. Hinson (R – St. Claire) was introduced in the House of Representatives last week.

Voter Photo ID

SJR 31 & SB 511 - sponsored by Sen. Kraus (R – Lee's Summit) would require voters to show photo identification before being allowed to vote. SJR 31 proposes a constitutional amendment and would go before a vote of the people. SB 511 would place in state law the details of how the requirements would work. Both bills were heard in the Senate Financial, Government Organizations and Elections on Monday, January 27th. No supporting testimony was provided. Testifying in opposition to the bill were the Secretary of State's Office, Advancement Project, the Missouri Centers for Independent Living, the Missouri Conference-NAACP, a St. Louis University student, the National Council of Jewish Women, the Missouri Association of Social Welfare, the Missouri National Education Association, United Steel Workers, and several private citizens. The opponents testified that the legislation would create barriers to allowing all Missouri citizens the ability to vote. Opponents claim that there is no evidence of massive voter fraud and that this is a solution in search of a problem. A similar two-prong approach was passed by the legislature in 2011, but Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon vetoed legislation to implement the requirement. A judge struck down the summary for the measure, so it never went before voters. No further action was taken on the bills.

National Propane Crisis Comes to Missouri

Missouri is the latest Midwestern state to call attention to the rising propane prices and potential shortages. According to reports, propane prices have tripled in cost to more than \$5 per gallon during the last week. Propane is used to heat homes and dry crops and many are worried there won't be enough, which was raised by the Energy Department's report that supplies of propane had fallen to record lows.

Missouri State Sen. Mike Parson (R – Bolivar) introduced Senate Resolution (SR) 1168 this week which is a non-binding resolution that urges the United States Department of Justice to investigate the price increase of propane, the price disparity of propane among storage facilities, and the supply shortage of propane available to consumers. Sen. Parson made an impassioned plea for an investigation into the rising prices on the Senate floor when introducing SR 1168. Missouri Attorney General Chris Koster this week announced that his office would launch an investigation into the rising prices of the gas which was prompted from calls from Sen. Parson and other Republican lawmakers.

New Leadership for House Democrats

The House Democratic Caucus has elected new leadership for 2014. Rep. Chris Kelly (D – Columbia) was elected as the Democratic Caucus Chairman and Rep. Gina Mitten (D – St. Louis) was elected as the Vice Chair.

Budget Update

The seven House Appropriations Committees continued working all week to sift through their respective state departments budgets. They continue to review the funding requests within the various state departments budgets. These seven appropriations committees will submit letters of

recommendation to the House Budget Committee within the next two weeks. Once the House Budget Committee receives the letters of recommendation they will begin to determine the best use of state tax dollars.

The budget crafters in the House and Senate will have approximately \$8.59 billion in general revenue to spend in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget. This includes \$346 million of new funding from the prior fiscal year. However, the legislature and the Governor continue to have a widely different perspective on the figures and will likely battle until May on these differing opinions. One of the major differences is funding for Medicaid expansion. The House of Representatives leadership has vowed not to pass any type of expansion, which will gut nearly \$1.7 billion from Nixon's budget right from the beginning.

The figures may vary between the legislature and the Governor, but the House Budget Committee Chair, Rep. Stream, and the Senate Appropriations Committee Chair, Sen. Schaefer, both agree on crafting their budgets around 4.2% estimated growth. Keep in mind, the legislature must pass the state budget by May 9th, but Governor Nixon has the final power to line item veto specific funding and or withhold funding as he determines is necessary.