



The fourth week of session has come to a close. With the quick start of legislative activity this week, activists flooded the halls sooner than usual. The halls were filled with advocates sharing information about their particular issues. From tort reform to general contracting, the general assembly clearly has multiple constituencies to balance.

Missouri Works

The House Workforce Development Committee convened Monday to consider HB 255, sponsored by Representative Travis Fitzwater (R-Holt's Summit). The bill modifies the Missouri Works Program by establishing a closing fund via tax credits. The objective with the language is to allow 21.5% of the current Missouri Works credits to be expended by the Department of Economic Development for front-end financing for start-ups that create jobs within the state. The MO Chamber of Commerce, MO Community College Association, MO Department of Economic Development, MO Economic Development Council, KC Chamber, KC EDC, and Cerner supported the bill. No opposing testimony was presented.

The Senate Economic Development Committee met Tuesday morning to discuss the Senate companion bill, SB 56, sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). Bill presentation and testimony mirrored that above.

Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant

The House Workforce Committee dedicated meeting time toward Representative Kathy Swan's (R-Cape Girardeau) HB 225, which creates the Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant. The grant targets adults 25 years and older with needs-based assistance for tuition and fees based on occupational shortages as determined by the Coordinating Board for Higher Education. Governor Mike Parson (R) proposed \$22 million to fund the grant program within his FY 2020 budget – an amount projected to help 16,000 eligible students. The Commissioner of Higher Education, MO Chamber of Commerce, MO Community College Association, WGU MO, State Technical College of MO, KC Chamber, Cerner, and MO National Education Association supported the legislation. No opposition was presented.

The Senate Education Committee met Tuesday afternoon to review the Senate companion bill, SB 16, sponsored by Senator Gary Romine (R-Farmington). Bill presentation and testimony mirrored that above.

Venue shopping

The Senate Government Reform Committee met Wednesday morning to discuss SB 7, sponsored by Senator Ed Emery (R-Lamar). The bill modifies provisions of civil procedure regarding joinder and venue. This issue has been around for years and proves controversial each one. During bill presentation, Senator Emery used the City of St. Louis as an example of joinder abuse. In St. Louis, alone, there were over 13,000 plaintiffs, of which over 12,000 were from out of state, 1000 were Missouri residents, and only 240 were actual residents of St. Louis. His objective is to tighten this loophole. Per usual, business, health, and insurance entities joined to support the legislation, leaving the MO Association of Trial Attorneys to oppose.

Low-income housing tax credits

The Senate Economic Development Committee convened Tuesday morning to consider SB 28, sponsored by Senator Dan Hegeman (R-Cosby). The bill places a cap on the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program. Specifically, the language establishes a cap of 50% of the federal tax credit level, which would equate to \$85 million this year. Acknowledging that this is a controversial issue, the sponsor indicated that this bill is a starting point for conversation for a good program that has lain dormant for a year. Echoing housing needs and wait lists that exist currently, the MO Workforce Housing Association, St. Michael's Veterans Center, RISE Community Development, and MO Bankers Association supported the bill. The MO Realtors Association, KC EDC, Empower MO, and MO Public Housing Authorities opposed the bill. Testimony was interesting with nearly all proponents and opponents testifying to the same – opposition to the number while support for the bill.

Tax credits and streamline sales tax

The Senate Ways and Means Committee met Tuesday to discuss SBs 50 and 46, sponsored by Senators Bill Eigel (R-St. Peters) Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester), respectively. The bills drastically change Missouri's current tax structures. Among the many provisions, the legislation reduces income and corporate tax rates and exempts interest received on deposits held at a federal reserve bank from Missouri adjusted gross income. Additionally, the bills require the Department of Revenue to enter into the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement and require businesses to collect taxes for online purchases. The MO Grocers Association, MO Retailers Association, Associated Industries of MO, MO Century Foundation, and MO Chamber of Commerce provided supporting testimony. The Civic Council of Greater KC and MO Budget Project provided opposing testimony.

Narcotics control

The Senate Seniors, Families, and Children Committee convened Wednesday morning to consider SB 155, sponsored by Senator Tony Luetkemeyer (R-Parkville). The bill establishes the Narcotics Control Act, which is aimed at protecting families against opioid related overdoses. Missouri remains the only state in the nation without a statewide prescription drug-monitoring program. Given the inaction, many municipalities throughout the state took action and now 80% of Missourians already fall under some form of prescription drug monitoring. Within the bill's many provisions, criteria for medical record purging are established and criminal standards are set for individuals utilizing the database who disclose information to third parties.

As expected, numerous individuals filled the overflowing room to testify for and against the bill. Proponents including physicians, local governments, and business groups supported the language due to patient safety and overdose concerns. One physician and a few individuals opposed the bill claiming that PDMPs are ineffective and privacy is paramount.

The House Insurance Policy Committee met later that day to discuss the House companion bill, HB 188, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Sikeston). Discussion and testimony mirrored that above. Immediately after the hearing, the committee went into executive session and passed the bill by a 13-4 margin.

Referendum reform

The Senate Local Government and Elections Committee met Wednesday afternoon to discuss SB 5, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville). The bill modifies the initiative and referendum process. During bill presentation, Senator Sater indicated that his objective is to update the initiative petition process – a process he believes has been distorted. His hope is to return the process to a citizen-driven, grassroots effort. Within the bill's many provisions, modifications are made relating to signature sheets, filing fees, signature verification fees, constitutionality of petition, summary statements, and more. Secretary of State John Ashcroft, MO Chamber of Commerce, MO Cattlemen's Association, and MO Farm Bureau supported the bill. AFL-CIO, First Rule, ACLU, American Federation of Teachers, SEIU, and MO First presented opposing testimony.

Capped sales taxes

The House Ways and Means Committee met Wednesday morning to discuss HB 374, sponsored by Representative Phil Christofanelli (R-St. Peters). The bill creates a statewide cap preventing political subdivisions from having sales tax rates higher than 14%. This cap would include the combination of all state and local sales taxes. The Show Me Institute provided supporting testimony. The City of Kansas City, Greater KC Chamber of Commerce, MO Municipal League, Port KC, and KC Area Transportation Authority provided opposing testimony. The MO Department of Revenue provided informational testimony to enlighten the committee on the 2500 different tax rates in Missouri.

Bill listing

As always, an updated bill listing is attached for your review.