



Another legislative week is in the books. Committee time mandates nearly every Capitol denizen's schedule. From budget to policy, committee rooms are full of activity. One would assume tensions would be high due to the legislative pace, but emotions and negotiations have been relatively mild to date.

Border war

The Senate Economic Development Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 182, sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill modifies provisions relating to the issuance of certain incentives to businesses relocating from certain counties in Kansas. The proposal is in response to what is commonly referred to as the "border war" and will help curb lease jumping and abuse of economic development tools within an eight-county region surrounding Kansas City. The Hall Family Foundation presented informational testimony to committee members relating to the wasteful spending by both states to attract jobs within the region. The KC Chamber, KC Civic Council, KC EDC, Hallmark, Platte County EDC, JE Dunn, MO Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of MO, Burns and McDonnell, City of KC, South KC Chamber, Jackson County, Blue Cross Blue Shield of KC, and Cerner joined to support the critical legislation. No opposing testimony was recorded.

Stadium funding

The Senate Economic Development Committee met Tuesday morning to consider SB 57, sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). The bill modifies provisions relating to certain tourism infrastructure facilities by continuation of the \$3 million appropriation for the Jackson County Sports Complex and a new \$6 million appropriation for the Enterprise Center. The St. Louis Sports Authority, Jackson County Sports Authority, City of KC, City of St. Louis, Jackson County, and the Kiel Center supported the bill. No opposing testimony was presented.

Missouri Works

The House Workforce Development Committee met in executive session Monday evening to consider passage of HB 255, sponsored by Representative Travis Fitzwater (R-Holt's Summit). The bill modifies the Missouri Works Program by allowing 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. During committee discussion, an amendment was adopted allowing participants to claim upfront financing if applicants are paying 100% of the county wage. Once amended, the committee passed the bill by a 14-0 vote.

Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant

The committee then turned its attention toward HB 225, sponsored by Representative Kathy Swan (R-Cape Girardeau). The bill 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. During committee discussion, language was added clarifying program eligibility. Once amended, the committee passed the bill by a unanimous 14-0 vote.

Missouri One Start Program

The House Economic Development Committee convened Monday evening to discuss HB 469, sponsored by Representative Derek Grier (R-Chesterfield). The bill provides authority for the Department of Economic Development to restructure its current economic development organization by combining the state's current workforce training programs including customized training, new jobs training, and job retention into one cohesive program. The objective is to allow the department greater flexibility to tailor programs for businesses interested in locating or expanding within the state. The Department of Economic Development, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, MO Chamber of Commerce, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, MO Community College Association, Ozark Technical College, Perry County Economic Development Council, Leggett and Platt, Associated Industries of MO, and Cerner echoed supporting arguments focusing on government efficiency and deal flexibility. No opposing testimony was presented.

Venue shopping

The Senate Government Reform Committee held an executive session Tuesday morning to consider passage of SB 7, sponsored by Senator Ed Emery (R-Lamar). The bill modifies provisions of civil procedure regarding joinder and venue to prevent forum shopping. During committee discussion, the sponsor indicated he is working on amendments to present on the senate floor. The committee then passed the bill by a 5-2 vote.

Term limits

The Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics Committee met Tuesday afternoon to discuss SJR 13, sponsored by Senator Jason Holsman (R-Kansas City). Under current law, no person may be elected to serve more than eight years total in any one house of the General Assembly and 16 years total in both houses. This constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters, provides that no person shall be elected to serve more than 16 years total in the General Assembly, regardless of which chamber. The language exempts service resulting from an election occurring prior to December 2020. The Greater KC Chamber of Commerce provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was provided.

Punitive damages

Senator Bill White (R-Joplin) appeared before the Senate Government Reform Committee Tuesday morning to present SB 65. The bill clarifies that punitive damages shall not be awarded except upon proof by clear and convincing evidence, and only if there is an award of damages more than nominal damages. According to the language, punitive damages may not be awarded against an employer or principal because of the conduct of an employee or agent unless specified criteria are met. Per usual, insurance, medical and business groups united to support the bill. The MO Trial Attorneys Association presented opposing testimony.

Highway bonds

The Senate Rules, Joint Rules, Resolutions and Ethics Committee met Tuesday afternoon to consider SCR 14, sponsored by Senator Dave Schatz (R-Sullivan). The resolution authorizes and directs the Office of Administration to execute and deliver a financing agreement for payment of debt service on transportation bonds issued by the Highways and Transportation Commission. The purpose of the resolution is to fund construction and repair of 250 bridges within the state highway system, as selected by the Commission, not to exceed \$351,000,000. Within the language, approval is given for debt service to be paid from future appropriations by the General Assembly from the General Revenue Fund, not to exceed \$30,000,000 per year, and expresses the intent to appropriate funds in the future in an amount sufficient to pay the debt service on the bonds. MoDOT, Associated General Contractors of MO, MO Chamber of Commerce, MO Transportation and Development Council, Construction Employers Coalition, American Council of Engineering Companies, Heavy Constructor Coalition of KC, MO Trucking Association, SITE Improvement Association, Limestone Producers Association, MO Farm Bureau, MO Municipal League, MO Corn Growers, City of St. Louis, Burns & McDonnell, MO State Troopers Association, and Municipal League of Metro St. Louis provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was presented.

School vouchers

The Senate Ways and Means Committee held an executive session Tuesday morning to consider passage of SB 160, sponsored by Senator Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester). The bill establishes the Missouri Empowerment Scholarship Accounts Program. For all fiscal years beginning on or after July 1, 2020, a taxpayer may make a qualifying contribution to an educational assistance organization and claim a tax credit. The tax credit is for 100% of the amount of the contribution and the amount of the tax credit claimed shall not exceed 50% of the taxpayer's state tax liability for the tax year for which the credit is claimed. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted removing a provision that allowed for 2% to be put toward marketing; requires testing to compare students' results with public schools; and lowered the annual cumulative amount of tax credits from \$50 million to \$25 million. Once amended, the committee passed the bill by a 5-1 vote.

Narcotics control

The Senate Seniors, Families, and Children Committee met in executive session Wednesday morning to consider passage of SB 155, sponsored by Senator Tony Luetkemeyer (R-Parkville). The bill establishes the Narcotics Control Act, which is aimed at protecting Missourians against opioid related overdoses. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted prohibiting municipalities from requiring Sudafed as a prescription drug. Once modified, the committee failed to pass the bill by a 3-3 vote.

Interestingly, shortly thereafter, the House considered its companion bill, HB 188, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Sikeston). During floor debate, many representatives unsuccessfully attempted to amend the bill. Proponents debated having a PDMP would reduce opioid deaths and doctor shopping. Opponents debated that, without a PDMP, the state ranks in the middle of the country in combating opioid related deaths. After three hours of debate, the bill received its first of two necessary approval votes. The second necessary House vote is expected early next week.

Fuel economy

The Senate Transportation, Infrastructure, and Public Safety Committee convened Thursday morning to discuss SB 201, sponsored by Senator Gary Romine (R-Farmington). The bill replaces the current registration fee system for certain motor vehicles with a fee system that is based on the vehicles' combined city/highway fuel economy. During bill presentation, the sponsor stated the current method is antiquated and with the increased usage of hybrid and electric cars, the current system is not contributing the funding it should. MoDOT, Missouri Trucking Association, and Associated General Contractors of Missouri provided supporting testimony. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers provided opposing testimony stating they want to ensure hybrid vehicles are not required to pay a higher fee but support the bill in general.

Arbitration

The Senate Small Business and Industry Committee convened Thursday morning to consider SB 154, sponsored by Senator Tony Luetkemeyer (R-Parkville). The bill modifies law regarding arbitration agreements between employers and at-will employees. The sponsor's goal with the language is to ease the current burden on Missouri's court system, protect confidentiality for plaintiffs and defendants, and provide a more efficient resolution to employment disputes that arise. The Greater KC Chamber of Commerce, MO Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of MO, MO Retailers Association, MO Grocers Association, and JE Dunn Construction provided supporting testimony. The United Steelworkers, AFL-CIO and MO Association of Trial Attorneys provided opposing testimony.