



Rallies and chants fill rotundas, constituents wearing matching tees crowd the halls, amendments abound, and floor debate is becoming more heated. After six weeks completed, legislative pace is in full swing. The weeks remaining in session are certain to be hectic and filled with significant action.

Missouri One Start Program

The House Economic Development Committee convened Monday evening to consider passage of 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. During committee discussion, a technical amendment was adopted defining terms within the proposal. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by 12-1 vote.

The Senate Economic Development Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss the Senate companion legislation, SB 184, sponsored by Senator Wayne Wallingford (R-Cape Girardeau). The Department of Economic Development, MO Community College Association, MO Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Chamber of Commerce, MO Economic Development Council, St. Louis Regional Chamber, Ozark Technical Community College, Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, St. Joseph Area Chamber of Commerce, and Associated Industries of MO echoed supporting. No opposing testimony was presented.

Narcotics control

The House kicked-off floor activity this week by considering passage of HB 188, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Sikeston). The bill establishes the Narcotics Control Act, which is aimed at protecting Missourians against opioid related overdoses. After an hour of debate, the House provided its final approval and passed the bill with a 103-53 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

Sales tax

The Senate Ways and Means Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 52, sponsored by Senator Bill Eigel (R-St. Peters). The bill phases out the state income tax and replaces it with an increase in state sales tax. Within the proposal's many provisions, local sales tax rates are capped at 8%. Citing studies of growth in other states without an income tax, the sponsor's objective is to make Missouri's tax code more competitive in order to attract more residents. No supporting testimony was presented. The MO Budget Project, Associated Industries of MO, Civic Council of Greater KC, and MO Society of

CPA's provided opposing testimony.

Tax increment financing

Senator Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester) appeared before the Senate Ways and Means Committee Tuesday morning to present SB 108. The bill modifies provisions relating to tax increment financing by redefining "blight," requiring independent third-party examiners to determine blight status, and removes economic development as a factor for TIF justification. Additionally, the bill limits conservation areas. The Show Me Institute, Great Rivers Habitat Alliance, and St. Charles County provided supporting testimony. The Economic Development Corporation of KC and Hunt Midwest provided opposing testimony.

Border war

The Senate Economic Development Committee convened Tuesday morning to consider passage of 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. With no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a unanimous 10-0 vote.

Stadium funding

The Senate Economic Development Committee met Tuesday morning to consider passage of 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. With no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-1 vote.

Reading intervention

The Senate Education Committee convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss SB 73, sponsored by Cindy O'Laughlin (R-Shelbina). Currently, school districts are required to have on file a policy for reading intervention plans for any pupils of the district in grades kindergarten through three. The bill increases the requirement to grade four and moves the authority to develop guidelines from the State Board of Education to local school districts. Multiple students and parents provided supporting testimony. The MO School Board Association, MO NEA, MO School Administrators Association, Educational Therapy Center, Parkwood School District, and multiple University of MO teachers provided opposing testimony.

Venue shopping

The House Judiciary Committee met Tuesday evening to discuss HB 231, sponsored by Representative Glen Kolkmeier (R-Odessa). The bill is the house companion to SB 7, sponsored by Senator Ed Emery (R-Lamar), and modifies provisions of civil procedure regarding joinder and venue. This issue has been around for years and proves controversial. Per usual, business, health, and insurance entities joined to support the legislation, leaving the MO Association of Trial Attorneys to oppose.

Missouri Works

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning 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 debate, Representative Deb Lavender (D-Kirkwood) offered an amendment allowing the credits to carry forward and be non-refundable. After considerable debate, the amendment failed. The bill then received its first of two necessary approval votes.

Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant

The House floor 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 debate, the sponsor amended the bill relating to Department of Revenue tax return examinations and deductions. Once modified, the bill received its first of two necessary approval votes.

The Senate Education Committee held an executive session Tuesday afternoon to consider the Senate companion bill, SB 16, sponsored by Senator Gary Romine (R-Farmington). During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted modifying the adjusted gross income requirement and adding an incentive to complete the program by allowing people already enrolled first access to grant money. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-1 vote.

Initiative petition

The House Local Government Committee convened Wednesday afternoon to discuss three bills relating to initiative petition procedures including SJR 7, sponsored by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit), SJR 1, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville), and SJR 11, sponsored by Senator Eric Burlison (R-Brookline Station). The bills have variances between them but, in general, modify the initiative petition process by changing the signature gathering requirements within congressional districts and change the percentage required for passage. The MO Chamber of Commerce, MO Cattlemen's Association, MO Soybean Association, MO Farm Bureau, and MO Corn Growers Association provided supporting testimony. The MO AFL-CIO, MO NEA, United for MO, American Federation of Teachers, First Rule, Planned Advocates for MO, Mid MO Fellowship, MO Sierra Club, and MO Healthcare for All provided opposing testimony.

Low-income housing tax credits

The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday evening to debate SB 28, sponsored by Senator Dan Hegeman (R-Cosby). The bill places a cap on the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program. The language, as originally filed, establishes a cap of 50% of the federal tax credit level, which would equate to \$85 million this year. During debate, the sponsor offered substitute language to increase the cap to 70% and include an additional 5% increase for workforce housing developments. After three hours of debate, the Senate compromised by removing the 5% dedicated to workforce housing but increased the overall cap to 72.5%. Once modified, the bill received its first of two necessary votes.

Employee drug use

The Senate Small Business Committee convened Thursday morning to discuss SB 227, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville). The bill provides that an employer may refuse to accommodate the use of marijuana on its premises for any use described in Article XIV of the Missouri Constitution. Additionally, the bill provides that an employer may institute a random drug-testing policy. Receipt of a positive drug test for marijuana may be considered grounds for dismissal or refusal of employment. The MO Chamber of Commerce and MO Society of CPA's provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was recorded.