



Filibuster season has officially begun. As House and Senate floor activity ramped up over the past few weeks, so too have the emotions and debates of our elected officials. This week proved to be the most controversial of the session thus far. The House spent much of its floor time debating abortion, while the Senate focused largely on tort reform. The Senate tort reform debate started early Tuesday afternoon and continued through Wednesday morning until 5:00. Ultimately, both chambers passed its priority legislation but left the building a bit lethargic in its wake.

Border war

The Senate dedicated floor time Monday evening 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. After brief discussion, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes. The Senate revisited the issue Thursday morning and passed the bill by a 32-0 margin. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

Stadium funding

The House Economic Development Committee met Monday evening to consider passage of HB 677, sponsored by Representative Jon Patterson (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. During committee discussion, Representative Derek Grier (R-Chesterfield) amended the bill to shorten appropriation time for the Enterprise Center from 30 years to 20 years, but also increased the appropriation from \$2.5 million for the first ten years to \$4.5 million for the final ten years. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 13-1 vote.

Corporate income tax

The Senate Ways and Means Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 151, sponsored by Senator Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester). The bill was vetted and passed last year and reduces the corporate income tax rate from 6.25% to 4.0% for all tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2020. However, due to a drafting error, the bill corrects dates certain corporate income tax provisions take effect. The MO Department of Revenue provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was presented.

Silica claims

The Senate Government Reform Committee met Tuesday morning to consider SB 317, sponsored by Senator Eric Burlison (R-Springfield). The bill establishes the Silica Claims Priorities Act, which prohibits a person from bringing a claim for injuries caused by silica unless certain evidence is presented. During bill presentation, the sponsor indicated that his objective is to address class action claims for individuals living near gravel roads and/or quarries. In his effort to reduce frivolous lawsuits, Senator Burlison hopes to establish a clear cause of action supported by evidence including a detailed medical report verifying that plaintiffs actually suffer from silicosis. Ash Grove Cement Company, MO Chamber of Commerce, Associated Industries of MO, and Capital Sand Company supported the bill. The MO Association of Trial Attorneys opposed the bill.

Missouri One Start Program

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning 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. After debate, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

Sales taxes

The House Ways and Means Committee met in executive session Wednesday morning to consider passage of HB 374, sponsored by Representative Phil Christofanelli (R-St. Peters). The bill creates a statewide cap preventing political subdivisions from adopting sales tax rates higher than 14%. This cap would include the combination of all state and local sales taxes. During committee discussion, substitute language was adopted that removed cap language and replaced it with provisions requiring sales tax ballots to include accumulative data of all local taxes to inform voters of actual tax burdens within their municipalities. Once modified, the committee passed the bill by a 6-3 vote.

Venue shopping

The Senate dedicated floor time Tuesday to consider passage of SB 7, sponsored by Senator Ed Emery (R-Lamar). The bill modifies provisions of civil procedure regarding joinder and venue. What most expected to be a controversial evening filled with debate turned even more controversial with an unbreakable filibuster that continued into Wednesday morning. After 16 hours of debate, the Senate finally agreed to compromise language that grandfathered active cases. Once modified, the bill received its first of two necessary approval votes.

Vehicle registration fees

The House Transportation Committee convened Thursday morning to consider HB 500, sponsored by Representative Aaron Griesheimer (R-Washington). The bill modifies calculations for vehicle registration fees from a horsepower basis to miles per gallon. The MO Department of Transportation, Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association, Missouri Municipal League, and Associated General Contractors of Missouri provided supporting testimony stating the legislation develops a sustainable funding source and provides funding for city and county roads not maintained directly by MODOT. The Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers provided opposing testimony arguing heavy load vehicles are causing road damage, not electric and hybrid vehicles. The MO Department of Revenue and AAA Club provided informational testimony.

Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant

The House dedicated floor time Thursday to debate 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. After considerable discussion, the House passed the bill by a 101-49 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further scrutiny.