



Another week of session has come to a close and tempers are beginning to flare. Whether its intra-caucus rifts or partisan politics causing the problems, emotions are running high on House and Senate floors. With six weeks remaining, the environment is bound to get worse. The good news is that the spring weather appears beautiful outside!

Extended-release opioids

The House dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to discuss HB 628, sponsored by Representative Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold). The bill is the House companion to SB 275, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville), and limits prescription of long-acting or extended-release opioids by dentists. During debate, Representative Shamed Dogan (R-Ballwin) successfully amended the bill by removing patients undergoing treatment of sickle cell disease from the bill's provisions. Once modified, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes. The House revisited the issue Thursday and passed the bill by a 135-16 vote. The bill now will face additional review by the Senate.

Initiative petition

The Senate dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to discuss SJR 1, sponsored by Senator David Sater (R-Cassville). The resolution modifies the initiative petition process by increasing the signature gathering requirements regarding constitutional amendments from 8% to 15% and requires a 2/3 majority from each congressional district. During debate, the sponsor offered substitute language clarifying the number of signatures needed for an initiative petition shall be equal to 5% of the legal voters 2/3 of the Congressional districts. Like most controversial and partisan issues, much was said but little progress was made. The bill eventually was returned to the calendar to await future debate.

Border war

The House Economic Development Committee met Monday evening to consider 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 and Missouri. 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, Economic Development Corporation of KC, Greater KC Chamber of Commerce, Blue Cross Blue Shield of KC, JE Dunn Construction, City of Kansas City, South KC Chamber of Commerce, Cerner Corporation, Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Civic Council of Greater KC, Associated Industries of Missouri, Jackson County Legislature, and Hallmark supported the bill and echoed that the border war is wasteful and not enriching the local economies. No opposing testimony was presented.

New Business Tax Credit

The House Economic Development Committee convened Monday evening to discuss passage of HB 1142, sponsored by Representative Noel Shull (R-Kansas City). Currently, only the value of real and depreciable personal property is included in the definition of "new business facility investment" for the New or Expanded Business Facility Tax Credit. The bill changes the definition of "new business facility investment" to include property acquired by purchase, lease, or license, including the right to use software and hardware via on-demand network access to a shared pool of configurable computing resources. After brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a unanimous 12-0 vote.

Fast-Track Workforce Incentive Grant

The Senate Education Committee met Tuesday afternoon to consider 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. The Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, MO Chamber of Commerce, Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, Commissioner of Higher Education Zora Mulligan, MO National Education Association, Western Governor's University, State Technical College, and Council on Public Higher Education joined to support the bill due to the need for access to a skilled workforce. No opposing testimony was presented.

Missouri Works

The Senate Economic Development Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss 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. The MO Department of Economic Development, MO Public Development Council, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, MO Chamber of Commerce, Greater KC Chamber of Commerce, and Cerner provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was presented.

Missouri One Start Program

The Senate Economic Development Committee then turned its attention toward 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 MO Department of Economic Development, MO Public Development Council, MO Chamber of Commerce, BKD, Springfield Development Corporation, Associated Industries, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater KC Chamber of Commerce, and Cerner provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was presented.

Taxation

The Senate Ways and Means Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss SB 188, sponsored by Senator Bill Eigel (R-St. Peters). Current law provides for a reduction in the top rate of income tax over a period of years from 6% to 5.5%. The bill further reduces the top rate of tax by 0.2%, with an eventual top tax rate of 4.9%. Additionally, the bill imposes a tax on the endowments of nonpublic higher education institutions at a rate of 1.9% of the aggregate fair market value of the assets of such endowments. No supporting testimony was provided. Washington University and St. Louis University provided opposing testimony.

Film tax credit

The Senate Economic Development Committee went into executive session Tuesday morning to consider passage of SB 366, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg). The bill establishes the Show Missouri Film and Digital Media Act and reauthorizes a tax credit for qualified film projects. The provisions cap the program at \$4.5 million. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote.

Port authority

The Senate Economic Development Committee met Tuesday morning to consider passage of SB 437, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg). The bill exempts sales and leases of real or personal property made by or to any port authority involving the use of such tax-exempt bonds from taxation. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote.

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to consider passage HB 1061, sponsored by Representative Jon Patterson (R-Lee's Summit). The bill exempts sales and leases of real or personal property made by or to any port authority involving the use of such tax-exempt bonds from taxation. After brief discussion, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

Sales tax cap

The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate HB 374, sponsored by Representative Phil Christofanelli (R-St. Peters). The bill, as originally filed, creates a statewide cap preventing political subdivisions from adopting sales tax rates higher than 14%. This cap includes the combination of all state and local sales taxes. During the bill's progression through the committee process, substitute language was adopted to remove cap language and replace 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. Additionally, the bill requires any seller who sells more than \$250,000 worth of goods per year to clearly state on the sales receipt or sales invoice the total rate of all sales tax imposed on the sale. During floor debate, an amendment was adopted increasing the sales threshold requirement from \$250,000 to \$500,000. Once modified, the House provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

Product liability

The House Judiciary Committee convened Tuesday evening to discuss passage of HB 186, sponsored by Representative Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). The bill provides that a person who is injured by a product has 10 years after the sale or lease of the product to bring a suit for damages. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 12-5 vote.

Silica claims

The House Judiciary Committee convened Tuesday evening to consider passage of HB 709, sponsored by Representative Jeff Shawan (R-Poplar Bluff). The bill establishes the Silica Claims Priorities Act. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by an 11-6 vote.

Education task force

The House Special Committee on Career Readiness met in executive session Wednesday afternoon to consider passage of HB 744, sponsored by Representative Louis Riggs (R-Hannibal). The bill establishes the "21st Century Missouri Education Task Force." The mission of the task force is to evaluate current educational processes, funding, and teachers within the state of Missouri. The task force will make recommendations for legislation and submit a report outlining a summary of task force activities to the General Assembly before August 28, 2020. Additionally, the taskforce will evaluate artificial intelligence and provide input on how to implement training within school districts. After brief discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 10-0 vote.

Narcotics control

The Senate Seniors, Families, and Children Committee convened Wednesday morning to consider passage of HB 188, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Sikeston). The bill establishes the Narcotics Control Act, which is aimed at protecting families against opioid related overdoses. The committee passed the bill by a 4-2 vote.