



MISSOURI

Legislative Update

Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce 2020 Missouri General Assembly Priorities Report

Workforce Development: The KC Chamber applauds the work of the General Assembly to improve the pipeline of qualified workers for Missouri businesses with the passage of a host of workforce development provisions. By reducing barriers to employment, Missouri will make it clear to current and prospective employers that the state is open for business and make Missouri a top state in which to do business.

Occupational License Reciprocity: Two separate bills have been sent to the governor that will streamline the process for working in Missouri for individuals who hold an out-of-state occupational license as long as the license is in good standing. One bill specifically targeted military spouses who hold an occupational license and the other bill targeted any individual who wished to hold a Missouri occupational license. Both bills require a decision to be issued within 30 days by the appropriate oversight body.

Fresh Start Act: This provision provides that no person shall be disqualified by a state licensing authority from practicing any occupation for which a license is required due to a prior conviction of a crime unless the crime is directly related to the duties of the occupation. Common sense criminal justice reforms like this have shown to decrease crime and expand the pool of qualified workers.

Expanded Workforce Access Act: This act requires each state licensing authority to grant a license to any applicant who has successfully completed the eighth grade, completed an approved apprenticeship program, and has passed the corresponding examination.

Tort Reform: The KC Chamber and our state coalition partners are pleased to see the passage of long overdue tort reform provisions in Missouri. The business community across the state made it clear to legislators that this must be a priority to ensure business climate stability. Among the measures passed are reforms on merchandising practices and punitive damages awards.

Merchandising Practices: A person seeking to recover damages for unlawful merchandising practices must establish that he or she acted as a reasonable consumer, that the alleged unlawful act would cause a reasonable person to enter into the transaction, and the individual damages with definitive and objective evidence to allow the loss to be calculated with a reasonable degree of certainty. Additionally, a court may dismiss a claim for failure to show a likelihood that the alleged unlawful act would mislead a reasonable consumer.

Punitive Damages: This act provides that punitive damages shall only be awarded if the plaintiff proves by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant intentionally harmed the plaintiff without just cause or acted with a deliberate and flagrant disregard for the safety of others, and the plaintiff is awarded more than nominal damages. Additionally, a defendant may now be credited for punitive damages paid in a federal court. This provision acts as a safeguard against repeated punitive damage awards for conduct that has already been punished in past litigation. A claim for punitive damages shall not be contained in the initial pleading and may only be filed as a written motion with permission of the court no later than 120 days prior to the final pretrial conference or trial date.



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Appropriations: The KC Chamber expresses gratitude to the General Assembly for keeping the funding for many regional priorities intact despite necessary steep cuts to the budget due to COVID-19. These important line items include \$2M for Bartle Hall; \$3M for the Jackson County Sports Complex and \$60M for a Buck O'Neil Bridge replacement. The KC Chamber is relieved to see that key funding for K-12 and higher education was mostly spared from the steep budget cuts. The KC Chamber looks forward to working with the General Assembly to jumpstart the state's economy as we begin to recover from the closures related to the coronavirus pandemic and to identify the appropriate tools to invest in key regional priorities.

Potential Ballot Questions: The KC Chamber was pleased that HJR77 did not gain traction in the General Assembly this legislative session. This ballot proposal would have curtailed Medicaid reimbursements for out-of-state patients, significantly impacting the state's children's hospitals, and instituted a work requirement on Medicaid recipients.

HJR106 was another piece of legislation the KC Chamber worked hard to stop as it would have cost the Kansas City Public School District and area charter schools millions of dollars, pending voter approval. The provision would have subjected the school district to unsustainable tax levy limits that would have crippled funding for KC public schools. The Chamber strongly believes that full implementation and expansion of Medicaid as well as adequate investment in our schools is critical for the vitality of the region.

PDMP: Despite broad support for legislation to create a statewide prescription drug monitoring program, or PDMP, the legislation stalled in the Missouri Senate where senators filibustered, citing privacy concerns. Even though Missouri remains the only state without a PDMP, local municipalities have moved forward with setting up their own regional programs to help fight the continuing opioid epidemic. The KC Chamber has long supported efforts to create a statewide program and sees PDMP as an essential piece to improving the overall health and wellness of the state's workforce.

MONA: The KC Chamber was disappointed to see another legislative session conclude without approving the Missouri Nondiscrimination Act (MONA). When area Representative Greg Razer offered his version of MONA, it marked the 22nd consecutive year that legislation was filed to add protections for individuals based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Going into this legislative session there was some optimism that MONA might advance beyond its historic 2018 progress where it was successfully voted out of committee in the House of Representatives. Policies that enable discrimination of any kind make it difficult for businesses to attract world-class talent and impede inclusivity which is necessary for an innovative business community. The KC Chamber remains committed to creating a more inclusive work environment in the region and across the state, in order to advance the growth and development of Missouri's economy.

Thank you to Missouri legislative leaders. Looking forward to 2021.

The business-friendly policy priorities for which the KC Chamber advocates, on behalf of our over 2,000 members, are vital to the economic vibrancy of our metropolitan region. The KC Chamber thanks Missouri legislators, legislative leadership and policy makers who supported these business policy priorities as adopted by the KC Chamber public policy committees. The Chamber encourages the General Assembly to maintain these legislative victories and to work during the 2021 session to create a prescription drug monitoring system, add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Missouri Human Rights Act, and create a long-term infrastructure funding mechanism to ensure Missouri's regional competitiveness.