



## **Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce** **2021 Missouri General Assembly Priorities Report**

**Transportation Investment (SB 262):** The KC Chamber applauds the work of the General Assembly to increase the investment in Missouri’s transportation infrastructure. Adequate investment for Missouri’s transportation infrastructure has long been a priority for the KC Chamber. The bill will increase the fuel sales tax 2.5 cents annually, bumping it up to 29.5 cents (from 17 cents) by 2025. This modest increase will result in Missouri no longer being in the bottom five of states in investment in transportation and infrastructure. Investing in infrastructure is critical for business growth and development in the state.

**COVID-19 Liability Protections (SB 51 and 42):** The KC Chamber was pleased to see the General Assembly pass COVID-19 related liability protections for health care providers, PPE makers and businesses. During these uncertain times, our business community needs a sense of certainty that if all reasonable attempts are made at safety, they will not be subject to frivolous lawsuits. Targeted legislation like this provides much-needed stability for the business community during highly uncertain times.

**Internet Sales Tax (SB 153 and 92):** The Missouri General Assembly passed legislation requiring businesses who reach certain thresholds and that conduct business in the state online to collect and remit sales tax. The KC Chamber is pleased to see this pass to ensure the fair collection of taxes and to also ensure that local retailers have fair competition with online retailers.

**PDMP (SB 63):** The KC Chamber is thrilled to see legislation to create a statewide prescription drug monitoring program, or PDMP, pass the Missouri General Assembly this year. The KC Chamber has long supported efforts to create a statewide program and sees PDMP as essential to improving the overall health and wellness of the state’s workforce.

**Criminal Justice (SB 26; SB 53 and 60):** The KC Chamber followed and engaged on some of the criminal justice efforts that passed the General Assembly this session: SB 26 and SBs 53 and 60. SBs 53 and 60 ended up passing by a strong bipartisan margin in both chambers. Some of the good things in the legislation passed includes loosening of occupational restrictions on felons, banning certain chokeholds, expanding expungement opportunities, providing free feminine hygiene products to inmates, establishing database of “problem” officers, establishing a program for officers to deal with stress and trauma, and allowing a prosecuting or circuit attorney the ability to file a motion to vacate or set aside a judgment if information arises to suggest an individual was wrongly convicted. However, the general repeal of KCPD Police residency requirements and some provisions limiting the amount police budgets can be reduced by city council or other legislative bodies were also passed.

**MONA:** The KC Chamber was disappointed to see another legislative session conclude without approving the Missouri Nondiscrimination Act (MONA). When area Senator Greg Razer offered his version of MONA, it marked the 23<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year that legislation was filed to add protections for individuals based on sexual orientation or gender identity. 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. The KC Chamber was relieved to see that discriminatory language banning transgender athletes from competing in the sport of the gender they identify with was defeated this year.

**Medicaid Expansion:** Despite voter-approved Medicaid Expansion passing by referendum in August of 2020 and Governor Mike Parson including funding in his budget, the General Assembly failed to fund Medicaid Expansion, which will most likely result in a lawsuit. The KC Chamber was disappointed to see the General Assembly fail to fund this voter-approved Constitutional Amendment. The Chamber has been a top voice for Medicaid Expansion for several years and continues to call on the General Assembly to support programs that provide greater access to coverage for uninsured individuals which will prepare the state's Medicaid system to maximize federal funding opportunities.

**Earnings Tax Renewal:** In light of continued overwhelming support among Kansas City voters for extension of the earnings tax, it has become a priority of the KC Chamber to seek extension of the renewal period for the earnings tax from every five years to ten years or more. This would ease the burden of the business community to continue supporting the campaign to renew the tax and give the city more budget certainty and a better bond rating from creditors. The KC Chamber looks to continue to work on this extension next year.

**FRA:** Missouri's Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) program directly benefits Missouri's economic and health care infrastructure. This highly successful public/private partnership serves as a model of vision, creativity and cooperation. The FRA program began as a voluntary program; it was expanded and enacted into law as a provider tax in 1992. Hospitals provide funds to the state, and Missouri's Medicaid program (now called MO HealthNet) uses these funds to earn federal matching dollars. Despite this successful program, it was not renewed this session. It is expected there will be a special session called later this summer to address this necessary mechanism to capture critical funds for hospitals across the state. The KC Chamber will continue to monitor this over the summer and advocate for responsible funding for our health care infrastructure.

**Thank you to Missouri legislative leaders. Looking forward to 2022.**

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 2022 session to ensure the vibrancy of Kansas City, add sexual orientation and gender identity to the Missouri Human Rights Act, and continue to work on ways to grow a robust pipeline of workers for employers in the state.