



**January 12, 2024**

The first full week of session has come to an end. The House is running efficiently with bill referral and priority legislation being reviewed by committees. The Senate is moving slowly through its process to assign bills to their respective committees and continues to grapple with basic functioning and civility. The House appears to be frontloading its work to leave the ever-struggling Senate additional time to work through its agenda.

#### **In Brief**

- Jefferson City police are investigating a “swatting” call that sent half a dozen armed officers to the home of Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft on Sunday evening. Secretary Ashcroft indicated the call was anonymous.
- On Monday, embattled Representative Sarah Unsicker (D-Shrewsbury) announced she is running for Governor. After some questionable social media activity, Representative Unsicker was pulled from her committee assignments and expelled from the House Democratic caucus late last year.

#### **Budget Update**

This week was quiet regarding budget activities. The Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to meet next Wednesday to consider SB 748, sponsored by Senator Lincoln Hough (R-Springfield), which renews the Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) taxes. These taxes are critical to funding the state’s Medicaid program.

#### **Transportation Update**

The House Committee on Transportation Accountability convened Thursday morning to question MoDOT personnel regarding Interstate Highway improvements, snow removal plans, and general infrastructure maintenance. The Director of the Improve I-70 Program shared that the first project to begin interstate updates will be awarded on February 14<sup>th</sup>. The project’s cost will be approximately \$340 million, will take place at the 63/70 interchange in Columbia, and is the largest single project ever undertaken by MoDOT.

MoDOT designees reported that the department is several hundred people short on maintenance and snow removal crews. There is concern that if a major storm lasting more than 24 to 48 hours were to occur, the times for clearing roads to appropriate safety standards would increase significantly and impact traffic negatively.

#### **New House Committees Formed**

Speaker Dean Plocher (R-Town & Country) created three new committees including the Special Committee on Education Reform, Special Committee on Policy Review, and Special Committee on Property Tax Reform. As special committees, the Speaker assigns both Republican and Democrat members. His usage for the committees will unfold in the weeks ahead.

### **Committee Activity**

#### **Childcare tax credits**

The House Committee on Workforce and Infrastructure Development convened Wednesday morning to discuss HB 1488, sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). The bill establishes the "Childcare Contribution Tax Credit Act." Beginning January 1, 2025, the proposal allows childcare facilities, employers, and working parents to claim tax credits with a goal of reducing barriers for working parents deciding to enter or reenter the workforce. The program has a sunset of December 31, 2030. Demonstrating the need for quality childcare and the positive impact it makes on enhancing the workforce, an overflowing room of business, health, and child advocates showed to testify, some of which included the MO Chamber of Commerce, United WE, **Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, City of Kansas City, University Health, Goodwill, AIM, JE Dunn, Campaign Life Missouri, Missouri Hospital Association, MO Economic Development Council, American Academy of Pediatrics, Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs, Aligned, and more. A private citizen opposed the proposal.

#### **Guns on buses and in churches**

The House Committee on General Laws convened Tuesday afternoon to discuss HB 1708, sponsored by Representative Adam Schnelting (R-St Charles). The bill allows a concealed carry permit holder to lawfully carry firearms on public transportation and in houses of worship. The bill also lowers the age to apply for a concealed carry permit from 19 to 18. Two private citizens supported the legislation. The Missouri Public Transit Association, KC Area Transit Authority, Greater STL Inc, City of Kansas City, **Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**, Missouri State Conference of NAACP, City Utilities of Springfield, and a pastor provided opposing testimony suggesting the legislation places a greater burden on those who are transporting the public and would not make public transportation safer.

#### **Regulatory Sandbox Act**

The House Economic Development Committee convened Wednesday morning to discuss HB 1960, sponsored by Representative Alex Riley (R-Springfield). The bill creates the Regulatory Sandbox Act, which provides an **expedited pathway for small businesses** creating innovative products to navigate state regulation and oversight. To spur entrepreneurship and innovation, the language allows for the waiver or suspension of certain regulations for two years by applying to the Regulatory Relief Office created within the Department of Economic Development. Associated Industries of Missouri, Opportunities Solutions Project, NFIB, Missouri Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, **Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**, City of Kansas City, Civic Council of Greater Kansas City, United WE, BioSTL, and Next Missouri presented supporting testimony sharing how the proposal would impact the state's economic development climate, particularly for women and minorities. The Missouri Sierra Club presented opposing testimony due to potential impact on environmental regulations.

### **Bill Tracker**

Bills continue to be filed daily. Please find an updated bill list using the following link: <https://govwatch.net/report/3BrZGXRqA5>

### **Upcoming Hearings of Interest**

House: <https://house.mo.gov/AllHearings.aspx>

Senate: <https://www.senate.mo.gov/hearingsschedule/hrings.htm>

**Upcoming Dates**

- January 15, 2024 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (no session)
- January 24, 2024- State of the State Address
- March 1, 2024 – Last day of bill filing
- March 18-22, 2024 - Legislative spring break
- April 1, 2024 – Easter break (no session)
- May 10, 2024 – Final day to constitutionally pass the FY 2025 budget
- May 17, 2024 – Last day of the 2024 legislative session
- August 6, 2024 – Missouri primary elections
- September 11, 2024 – Veto session
- November 5, 2024 – Missouri general elections

My thanks,

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My thanks,