

LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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ERA is back. **SCR7** (Bray) Ratifies the Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution.

The bill was heard in committee 2/7/07. In the past bills renewing this issue were referred to committee but not heard.

Leaguers will be quite interested in supporting **HB427** (Ruestman) which revises the responsibilities of the Missouri Women's Council and requires the Council to initiate programs to support women; balancing work and family, with home based businesses, working part time from home, and to promote healthy life styles for unemployed women. This bill was referred to the Special Committee on Workforce Development and Workplace Safety. Steve Hunter is Chairmen of this committee and his telephone number at the capitol is 573-751-5458. We need to urge him to set a hearing on HB427. Rep Ruestman's telephone is 573-751-9801 to ask what else we might do.

---Laura Worstell

Health and Mental Health—Lael Von Holt

Missouri HealthNet will replace Medicaid in 2008. The governor has confirmed the new name; priorities are set; and legislation is underway.

Missouri HealthNet is a new direction, and it will require strong leadership in the health and mental health systems, as well as in the Legislature. League will expect legislators to place high value on the needs of vulnerable populations, and to fund accordingly.

Strong legislation will be required, such as the following:

HCS HB 39 (Portwood) is one of those strong bills that is progressing well. This bill restores health benefits for approximately 4100 Missouri workers with disabilities. It has an emergency clause; is entitled Ticket to Work Health Assurance Program; was Reported Do Pass from the Rules Committee (H) on 2-7-07, and is now on House Bills for Perfection.

HB 353 (Schaaf) changes laws regarding fraud and abuse in Medicaid. This bill has been high profile. It was perfected with amendments in House Rules Committee, and adopted on 2-6-07. It was Reported Do Pass from the Fiscal Review Committee on 2-7-07, and is now on the House Calendar for Third Reading.

SB 3 (Gibbons) regarding mental health reform, particularly in reference to abuse and neglect of clientele in state run as well as private facilities. Investigative reports of substantiated cases would be open to the public, and stiff penalties would be assessed. Hearing on SB 3 was conducted in the Senate Health and Mental Health Committee on 2-6-07.

Children- Laura Pitts

SB1 (Gibbons) requires criminal background checks for anyone hired with “substantial contact with children”. It places more accountability on employers and employment agencies that hire or place convicted abusers. Referred to Judiciary, Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Committee. Hearing was conducted 2/5/07.

SB84 (Champion) modifies provisions of criminal background checks for emergency placement of a child outside the family. It removes the exception for checks on family members. Complies with FBI regulations. 2/1 reported to the House floor as a consent bill. Consent Calendar scheduled for 2/12.

SB5 (Loudon) modifies laws on child pornography to allow a child victim to recover damages through civil courts. Heard in Judiciary, Civil and Criminal Jurisdiction Comm. 1/2/07.

SB16 (Scott) Requires all children in kindergarten or first grade to have a comprehensive vision test. Heard in Seniors, Families and Public Health Committee 2/6.

SB25(Champion) Prohibits closing a child abuse investigation prior to the completion of the investigation in the event of the child’s death. Scheduled for consent calendar 2/12.

SB 161 (Shields) Creates a quality rating system for child care facilities beyond licensing requirements. Voted do pass from committee 2/6 and scheduled for Senate Formal Perfection Calendar 2/12/07. **League Strongly Supports.**

Elementary, Secondary and Higher Education- Laura Worstell

Some action has been taken in both Houses. **SB160** which adds vocational and technical schools to the A+ Scholarship Program was heard in committee. This program has been quite successful in encouraging high school graduates to continue their education with tuition assistance. Adding these schools would continue to increase the number of post secondary education students in Missouri. See below for conditions for adding these schools. LDW

SB6 (Loudon) was heard in the Senate Committee for Education 1-24. This bill establishes the “Safe Schools Fund” which will allow schools to use funds allocated on a per pupil basis to implement their safety related procedures. This is a follow up of the previously passed safe schools act. LWV will **support** legislation assuring funds will be used to increase the safety of our students.

HB228 (Thomson) Broadens reporting of acts of violence to include all teachers at an attendance center in addition to the present requirement of school district employers with a need to know. Schools will include an annual drill and staff must receive sufficient training in crisis management for details to remain familiar through out the year. 2/1/07 Referred to Elementary and Secondary Education Committee.

HB 110 (Flook) Imposes a surcharge on moving traffic violations and creates the School Bus Safety Assistance Fund to assist schools in obtaining buses with seat belts.2/8/07 Referred to Transportation Committee.

SB228 (Graham) Grants MOHELA the ability to sell or liquidate any asset of the Authority. Referred to the Senate Education Committee 1-18, but not on the calendar. 2/8/07 no change.

HB48 (Harris) Authorizes an income tax deduction for tuition paid for Missouri public institutions of higher education. 1/4/07 Second read. No committee assignment.

SB149 (Nodler) Extends to any private vocational or private technical school A+ reimbursements, provided the institution is a member of the North Central Association and accredited by the higher learning commission. Referred to Education Committee 1-17.

HB498 (Robb) establishes the Milton Friedman "Put Parents in Charge" Education Program and authorizes individual and business tax credit for contributions to certified educational charitable organizations. This bill and will create much discussion. League will study it and keep members informed. 2/9/07 Not yet referred to committee.

SB160 Rupp Alters provisions for higher ed scholarships adding A+ scholarship reimbursements to private vocational and technical schools if members of North Central Association accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and a 501-C-3 org. Hearing conducted 2/7/07. LWV supports.

Elections, Ethics and Campaign Finance Reform- Nancy Copenhaver

Our condolences are extended to Nancy in the death Sunday of her mother-in-law.

Taxes- Elaine Blodgett

SB 20 (Griesheimer): Modifies the laws relating to tax increment financing. Sponsor: Last Action: 1/31/2007 - Hearing Conducted S Economic Development, Tourism & Local Government Committee. - Last Modified: 2/8/2007 This bill is similiar to last year's in that it places more restrictions on the use of TIFs. LWVMO supports.

Tax Credits, Incentives:

HB 444 (Jetton): Authorizes an income tax deduction for any Social Security benefits received by the elderly, regardless of income. Proposed Effective Date: 08/28/2007. Co-Sponsor, Bearden, Carl (16). Last Action: 02/08/2007 - Rules - Reported do pass (H). LWVMO opposes on the grounds that as taxes are done away with, the state is left with less money than it had to fulfill needs of the state. No replacement money is being proposed.

HB 131 (Cooper): Authorizes an exemption from state and local sales and use tax for the costs of utilities, chemicals, and materials used to produce a product. Proposed Effective Date: 08/28/2007. Last Action: House Committee: SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON TAX REFORM.

The trouble with tax credits or tax incentives is that while it looks as if the legislature is doing a nice or helpful thing for some group of people like farmers, cosmetologists, beekeepers, optometrists or even environmental energy savings equipment, it all means the same thing to state: more money kept out of the revenue stream.

Energy- Win Colwill, Director

SB 154 (Graham) Renewable Energy Standard; no change

SB 54 (Koster) Green Energy Initiative; no change

SB 328 (Engler) Bio-Reactor Landfill Permit. This act directs DNR to expeditiously approve a bio-reactor landfill pilot project in Columbia. The bill will allow yard waste, currently disallowed in landfills, to be deposited in the landfill provided projections show yard waste will increase methane gas production for electricity generation. Other recyclable organic materials may be deposited in the landfill and be considered “recycled”. The bill also directs Columbia to provide funding for university research to demonstrate the project’s successful production of alternative energy. Referred to Commerce, Energy & Environment Committee 1/25/07.

COMMUNICATIONS-Jo Sapp

January 25th Jo testified in opposition of **SB284** which would remove cable franchising from local jurisdiction to the state and reduce the number of public access, educational and governmental channels available. League uses the public access channel, and this benefits the League and encourages voter participation and urges local jurisdiction.

Legislative Day Registration Form
Thursday, March 29, 2007
Please enclose \$10 to cover the cost of the information packet and mail to the address below. Additional information will be available in the next MO Voter
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