



LEGISLATIVE BULLETIN

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MISSOURI

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MISSOURI NON-PARTISAN COURT PLAN

The initiative petition to get the repeal of the Non-Partisan Court Plan on the ballot is in the process of having signatures verified. If you know of anyone who signed the petition and would now like to have their name removed, have them contact the Secretary of State's office for the proper form. League will be working with other groups to defeat this effort of "Show Me Better Courts" at the polls if the initiative is certified. Watch for updates later in the summer.

ENERGY/GLOBAL CHANGE – Win Colwill

PACE PASSES! Clean energy supporters, including LWVMO, are celebrating the passage of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) which passed on the final day of the session attached to **HB 1692** and now awaits the Governor's signature. PACE enables municipalities to help home and business owners finance energy efficiency retrofits and renewable energy systems by establishing Clean Energy Development Boards which can issue bonds and make loans to property owners. The loans are repaid over 20 years through a special assessment attached to the owner's property tax payments. At least 16 other states have enacted PACE.

The League's statement to the Senate Commerce Committee pointed out that "the high upfront costs of energy retrofits and renewable energy systems discourage property owners from implementing these beneficial measures." By spreading out of cost of such projects over 20 years, PACE financing can spur energy saving projects and renewable energy installations across the state, benefiting individuals, communities and the state by creating jobs, increasing property values, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

ACTION NEEDED: Call Governor Nixon's office via the Capitol switchboard at (573) 751-2151 and urge him to sign the PACE bill, **HB 1692** {*and you thought your job was done for the year . . . activism is never done!*}

Despite concerted efforts by advocates for climate change action, both the House and Senate passed resolutions (**HCR 46** and **SCR 46**) urging Missouri's Congressional delegation to vote AGAINST cap and trade legislation. League members are urged to counter this misguided action by urging Sen. Bond and Sen. McCaskill to SUPPORT and strengthen the American Power Act authored by Senators Kerry and Lieberman.

SB 848 (Barnitz) was also passed with the strong support of many Missouri farmers. It allows methane from animal waste to qualify as a renewable energy resource that can be used by electric utilities to meet Proposition C renewable energy mandates. Critics noted that since the measure does not increase the percentage of renewable energy mandates, it may reduce the amount of solar and wind energy used by utilities.

MENTAL HEALTH/HEALTH – Lael Von Holt

The 95th Missouri Legislative Session was clearly a troubled one for Missouri, with declining revenues, serious budget cuts, and uncertain federal dollars. Mental health took quite a hit in all segments of service, with the outlook for next year equally troubling. A few bright lights did emerge this session, particularly for children with autism and those alleged to be victims of abuse.

Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed (need only Governor's action)

HB 2010 (Icet) the appropriations bill for the Department of Mental Health, includes up to 11% cut in mental health services. At the time of this writing, more cuts are expected in order to balance the state budget. It's now the Governor's call.

HB 1764 (Diehl) initially filed regarding regulation of insurance companies but now including opposition to the new federal health reform law, prohibits persons, employers, or health care providers from being compelled to participate in any health care system. This bill includes the health care referendum clause which will be submitted to the voters in the August, 2010 election. **HB 1764** will be reviewed by LWVMO at its next meeting.

HB 1311 & 1341 (Scharnhorst) requires health insurance coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of the autism spectrum disorders. Benefit caps are at \$40,000 annually, the age range is through 18. A similar bill, **SB 618** (Rupp) faltered in the Rules Committee.

HB 2270 (Cooper) promotes improved services for children who are suspected victims of child abuse or sexual assault and who need forensic medical evaluation, a consent bill.

Bills of interest that died in committee:

SB 639 (Schmitt) authorizing a state false claims act for MO HealthNet

SB 918 (Schaefer) regarding pharmacy managers and protection of prescriptions

HB 1398 (Roorda) prohibiting denial of mental health care for children alleged to be victims of abuse

HB 2123 (Cooper) authorizing the MO HealthNet Division to implement a statewide dental delivery system.

Multiple bills filed by Sen. Bray, Rep. Hughes, and Rep. Brown regarding state universal health assurance all failed to advance.

League thanks all of you who took legislative action in person, by telephone, or e-mail on behalf of bills highlighted in our Legislative Bulletins this session. Thanks also for your response to Action Alerts on health reform received from our lead organization, LWVUS.

VOTER ID MANDATE WILL NOT BE ON BALLOT (Whew!)

No final vote was taken on either **HCS/HJR 64** (Cox) or **HB 1966** (Diehl) on May 14, so the photo ID mandate provision will not be on the ballot this year. **HCS/HJR 64** was similar to proposals filed in each of the last two sessions in response to a Missouri Supreme Court ruling handed down in 2008 regarding the permissibility of voter ID restrictions. The **HCS/HJR 64** also contained new provisions to allow early voting. **HJR 64** allowed the legislature to require any person seeking to vote in a public election to provide election officials a driver's license or other government-issued photo identification. **HB 1966** was the companion bill to enact a photo ID mandate and advance voting provisions which were not well thought out nor supported by election authorities

Very small ETHICS BILL PASSES

The House gave final approval to **CCS/HCS#2/SB 844** (Shields) on May 14. The conference committee version (CCS) was much smaller than the **HCS#2**. The CCS removed the photo ID mandate. The main provisions left in the CCS pertain to lobbyist expenditures and reporting, campaign committees and contributions. No contribution limits imposed, making the bill a very weak one. This bill, unfortunately, was not the one debated for weeks in the special committee and passed out of that committee with heavy bipartisan support.

THE BUDGET – from the Missouri Budget Project Report

The budget bills were passed by the General Assembly a week earlier than required. A total of more than \$450 million was cut from the budget proposed by the Governor in January. The majority leadership (Rep. Allen Ictet, Budget Committee Chair and Senator Rob Mayer, Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee) worked closely with the Governor to identify the budget lines that were cut. The budget bills moved quickly through the House and Senate and Conference process, with little discussion or debate.

The Governor and many members of the General Assembly congratulated themselves on passing a budget in these tough economic times. It is hard to appreciate this budget as a job well done. No Department escaped unharmed, but some decisions really cut into the meat of services. The budget for next year reneges on full funding for elementary and secondary education. By keeping funding flat at the current fiscal year's level, about \$105 million was "saved". Parents As Teachers was slashed by more than half, and subsidized child care for low income working parents lost ground. Deep cuts were made to mental health services, as well as in-home services for seniors or individuals with a disability who are not eligible for Medicaid. Transportation and other services for seniors were cut.

Including some balanced, common sense ways to generate revenue to stave off these cuts could have produced an effort worthy of praise. But failing to do this, failing to pass cost savings measures that were assumed in the budget, and failing to include realistic projections for Medicaid growth combine to create a budget fiasco for the Governor.

On May 19 Linda Luebbering, announced that the budget just sent to the Governor has a \$350 million hole. He will announce cuts when he signs the budget bills in June.

Missed Opportunities

The General Assembly passed up numerous opportunities to get next year's budget and the FY2012 budget on more stable footing. Bills were introduced to create a mechanism to collect sales taxes on internet purchases in the same way that purchases made in Missouri stores are taxed. These bills had bi-partisan support and made serious progress this year.

A bill proposed to raise taxes on tobacco products did not even get a Committee hearing. This week South Carolina raised their tobacco taxes, leaving Missouri with the lowest tobacco taxes in any state.

Bills that would have closed sales tax loopholes, reformed Missouri's personal income tax structure and curbed the growth of tax credits did not have traction.

Successful defense: Mega sales tax proposal stalled in both the House and Senate

HJR56 (Purgason) and **SJR 25** (Cunningham) would have eliminated personal and corporate income taxes and replaced them with a much higher sales tax on almost all goods and services. Called the "fair" tax, these constitutional amendments were stopped in their respective houses. Enacting this regressive tax policy in a constitutional amendment was dangerous policy. It will undoubtedly be back next year for another round of consideration.

A Taxpayer Bill of Rights (TABOR) constitutional amendment, HJR87 (Icet), was also introduced and heard in the House. This would place a spending lid in the Constitution, similar to the revenue lid enacted in the Hancock amendment. Interest in this appears to be waning as interest (driven by a national conservative agenda) in the mega sales tax proposal waxes.

Other changes

HB1965 (McNary) began as a bill to repeal expired parts of the law. It evolved into another omnibus bill. Its provisions include establishing a Joint Committee on Missouri's Future to develop strategies to increase economic opportunity for Missourians, improving the health status of Missourians, developing an improved education system, and implementing strategy to achieve and maintain a modern infrastructure and transportation system. It also includes implementing budget forecasting and recommendations to determine the proper course of future legislative and budgetary actions. The first report is due January, 1, 2011.

HB1868 (Scharnhorst) sets up a Joint Committee on the Reduction and Reorganization of Government. A report on reducing, eliminating or combining State Departments is required by December 31, 2010.

HB1868 also includes setting up a commission to reorganize the provision of health care to those insured by Medicaid, to state employees, retirees and their dependents in a Division of State Health Care in the Office of Administration.

After days of discussion, **HB1543** (Wallace) made no changes to direct slowing down implementation of the Foundation Formula for elementary and secondary schools or in funding for summer school. It does direct Parents as Teachers programs to high need or low income families and allows a fee to be charged for PAT services. It allows the state to fund the Career Ladder program, but does so looking forward.