

**Weekly Capitol Report – Provided by Grote and Associates**

**March 29, 2024 - 12th Week of the Second Session of the 102nd General Assembly**

Missouri legislators returned to the Capitol this week from their annual spring break. This week saw influx of committee and floor substitutes and amendments, along with productive debate in both chambers. Additionally, the House Budget Committee finalized their version of the FY25 Budget, which is expected to be debated by the full House Chamber next week.

With the quickly approaching adjournment date of May 17th, House and Senate members are now eyeing every opportunity available to advance their proposals to Governor Parson's desk. With only seven weeks remaining, and the House dedicating next week to Budget debate, activity is predicted to only becoming more chaotic.

**Media Matters** - Attorney General Andrew Bailey has filed suit against Media Matters to compel the nonprofit to submit documents related to his investigation into its alleged fraudulent business practices. The investigation began in November 2023 after evidence surfaced that Media Matters solicited donations from Missourians under false pretenses, aiming to influence advertisers to withdraw from X, formerly known as Twitter, in direct violation of the Missouri Merchandising Practices Act. The Attorney General is seeking a court order mandating Media Matters to comply with the Civil Investigative Demand within 20 days.

**Candidate Filing** - Tuesday was the last day of candidate filing for the 2024 elections. While the majority of people were eyeing the 3-CD race, the Secretary of State race has now become the hot race to watch. Within the last couple of hours of filing, House Speaker Dean Plocher pivoted from his previous Lieutenant Governor bid to Secretary of State. Additionally, Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman pivoted from her 3-CD race to also bid for Secretary of State, joining an already crowded GOP race for Secretary of State. Late withdrawals from four congressional races, four state House races and the Lieutenant Governor's race means filing for those offices will resume on Tuesday. Filing for those offices will occur during business hours and will open at 8 a.m. on Tuesday and close at 5 p.m. on April 5 at the Secretary of State's office in Jefferson City. Under Missouri law, when candidates withdraw within two days of the close of filing, a special filing period opens for four days in the following week.

**Cannabis Licenses** - On Wednesday, it was announced Missouri cannabis regulators have revoked nine of the 48 social-equity cannabis licenses issued in October, after finding the companies that obtained them didn't meet eligibility requirements. Eight were dispensaries linked to out-of-state groups and one was a wholesale facility. According to the Division of Cannabis Regulation, the "purported majority owners" of the eight revoked licenses lacked knowledge of agreements or operations of the license — and in some cases did not know the person who applied for the license on their behalf.

**Budget Update** - As the House Budget Committee adjourned Monday evening after completing the markup process for the FY2025 budget, Chairman Cody Smith (R-Carthage) had trimmed nearly \$2 billion from Governor Parson's original \$52.7 billion spending plan. The largest part of the deduction is from a decline in Medicaid enrollment. What is usually a marathon hearing lasting well into the evening and consisting of contentious debate on the Chairman's changes, was condensed into less than five hours. Committee members drafted over 100 amendments, but after Chairman Smith announced the four-hour time-limit, only fifteen additional amendments were offered in committee. Still included in the budget is

a 3.2% pay raise for state workers, an increase in base pays for teachers of \$40,000, a fully funded foundation formula and a 3% increase for institutions of higher education.

The 17 budget bills are expected to be brought before the full House chamber next week. Typically, appropriations bills have a set time limit for full debate, with each party having a predetermined amount of time for each bill which is determined by the Majority and Minority Floor Leaders. It is highly anticipated Democratic members will be drafting and offering numerous amendments in an attempt to further modify the \$50.7 billion dollar budget.

The complete listing of committee changes from the Governor's recommended FY 2025 Budget can be found [Here](#).

### **Senate Floor Activity**

**Intoxicating Cannabinoids Control Act** - The Senate dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate SB 984 sponsored by Senator Nick Schroer (R-St. Charles). The bill is the Senate companion to HB 1781, sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins (R-Bowling Green) and creates the "Intoxicating Cannabinoid Control Act", which establishes a regulatory framework to regulate "intoxicating cannabinoids". Since the passage of the federal Farm Bill, hemp-derived products, including Delta-8, have flooded the market with little to no oversight and these products lack age verification, lab testing for chemicals, which include heavy metals, contaminants. Additionally, they lack dosage limits and proper packaging and labeling standards. The intent of the of the legislation is to establish regulation and oversight for all products containing intoxicating cannabinoids. During debate, the sponsor offered substitute language to change the title from "Relating to Intoxicating Cannabinoids" to "Relating to Cannabis"; include language that criminalizes the disclosure of medical marijuana patients' information to unauthorized parties; removes references to cannabimimetic agents; and removes provisions requiring the Department of Health and Senior Services and the Department of Public Safety to enforce rules and regulations actively and aggressively. During debate, Senator Karla May (D-St. Louis City) expressed concerns with creating new regulations for existing businesses and argued the bill created an unfair business advantage for marijuana dispensaries and marijuana stores. After about two hours of debate, the bill was returned back to the calendar to be debated further another day.

**Omnibus Child Protections** - The Senate dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate SB 862, sponsored by Senator Holly Thompson-Rehder (R-Sikeston). The bill modifies provisions relating to money held by the Children's Division for the benefit of a child. During debate, the sponsor amended the bill to include SB 899, relating to child care providers; SB 811, relating to the temporary child care provider licenses; SB 1133, relating to the placement of a child; SB 863, modifies provisions relating to medication-assisted treatment and child placement; SB 878, court shall not award custody, guardianship, or unsupervised visitation in a paternity action to a parent who has been found guilty of, or pled guilty to, specified offenses when a child is a victim; and SB 1026, modifies provisions relating to child custody arrangements. Senator Bill Eigel (R-St. Charles) then amended the bill to remove SB 811 provisions and stated the language did not fit within the scope of the bill. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

**Business Development** - The Senate dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate SB 894, sponsored by Senator Travis Fitzwater (R-Fulton). The bill establishes provisions relating to the promotion of business development. Specifically, the bill creates the Regulatory Sandbox Act which provides small businesses

creating innovative products in all industries a way to waive or suspend certain regulations for two years by applying to the Regulatory Relief Office created within the Department of Economic Development. The bill also eliminates the Small Business Fairness Board because they have not had a quorum or the capability to meet over the past ten years. Additionally, the bill includes the Right-to-Start Act, which requires the Commissioner of Administration, in conjunction with the Office of Entrepreneurship, which is established by the act, to file a report with the General Assembly making recommendations on improving access and resources for new Missouri businesses that have been in operation for less than three years and also creates the Office of Entrepreneurship to promote policies and initiatives to support growth in Missouri. During debate, the sponsor successfully amended the bill to provide for technical changes. Senator Rick Brattin (R-Belton) then attempted to amend the bill to create a Landfill Enhancement Zone, which would allow local governing bodies to adopt the zone and provides a tax credit for developers. After considerable debate, the amendment failed, the Senate then provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

**Omnibus Veterans** - The Senate dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to revisit SB 912, sponsored by Senator Ben Brown (R-Washington). The bill modifies several provisions relating to veterans by requiring the MO Veterans' Commission to review veterans' suicides, collect data of services by state agencies provided to veterans, amongst several specialty license plate provisions. Additionally, the bill prohibits any foreign ownership of agricultural land near military areas and exempts any military signing bonuses from state income taxes. After no debate, the Senate passed the bill by a 27-2 vote. The bill now will be sent to the House for further consideration.

The Senate Veterans, Military Affairs and Pensions Committee convened Wednesday afternoon to consider passage of HB 1495, sponsored by Representative David Griffith (R-Jefferson City). The bill is similar to SB 912, highlighted above and directs the Missouri Veterans Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health, to provide recommendations and make efforts to adopt procedures, programs, treatment options, additional aid, and any other assistance deemed necessary to assist in efforts to prevent veteran suicide, subject to appropriation. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 5-0 vote.

**Taxation** - The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate SJR 50, sponsored by Senator Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester). Upon voter approval, the resolution places a 5.5% cap on income taxes. The resolution also modifies a provision prohibiting sales taxes levied on transactions not taxed as of January 1, 2015, by providing an exception for sales and use taxes on subscriptions, licenses for digital products, and online purchases of tangible personal property. During floor debate, the sponsor offered substitute language to clarify the ballot summary that the voters would see. Senator Doug Beck (D-St. Louis) further amended the bill to include the Tax Payers Bill of Rights, which would limit the amount of revenue governments in the state can retain and spend and absent voter approval, it requires excess revenue to be refunded to taxpayers. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

**Extended Care Facility Licenses** - The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate SB 1111, sponsored by Senator Rusty Black (R-Chillicothe). The bill creates a prescribed pediatric extended care facility license issued by the Department of Health and Senior Services. During debate, the sponsor offered a substitute to include SB 899, which modifies provisions relating to child care provider licensing requirements for certain providers. Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg) then attempted to amend

the bill to include SB 726, which removes the expiration date on certain provisions relating to gender transition. After considerable debate, the sponsor withdrew his amendment and Senator Bill Eigel (R-St. Charles) then amended the bill to clarify and limit the MO Department of Social Services authority when inspecting the conditions of places. Senator Mary Elizabeth Coleman (R-Arnold) also amended the bill to allow the Department to grant temporary license for people that are already operating and want to expand to open another site and already have a license that is in good standing. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

**Reinsurance Contract Disposition** - The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate SB 834, sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffero). This bill relates to the disposition of reinsurance contracts reinsuring policies of life or health insurance or annuities issued by insurers that have been placed into conservation, rehabilitation, or liquidation, with terms governing continuation or termination of such contracts. The bill also addresses a guaranty association's election to assume the liquidated insurer's rights and obligations under reinsurance contracts and a receiver's continuation of policies of life or health insurance or annuities issued by an insolvent insurer. During debate, the sponsor offered a floor substitute to include SB 1348, relating to insurance documents; and SB 1359, relating to mutual insurance companies. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

The Senate then turned its attention towards SB 1359, sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield). This is the Senate companion bill to HB 2452, sponsored by Representative Jeff Knight (R-Lebanon) and creates the "Protecting Missouri's Mutual Insurance Companies Act", which establishes standards regarding reinsurance coverage and company examinations. The bill exempts Missouri mutual insurance companies from acquiring or carrying reinsurance greater than adequate reinsurance and that unlimited reinsurance would be optional. During debate, the sponsor offered a floor substitute to mirror SB 834, highlighted above. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

**Loan Modifications** - The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate SB 835, sponsored by Senator Sandy Crawford (R-Buffero). This bill updates two provisions relating to lending. First, it repeals an existing prohibition against parties agreeing in writing to any rate of interest, fees, and other terms and conditions in connection with any loan of less than \$5,000 secured by real estate used for agricultural activity. Second, the bill permits lenders to charge consumers for the cost of a credit report or reports. Finally, the bill repeals a provision enacted in 1883 that requires description of a woman's status as "wife" when executing a notary's certificate of acknowledgement form in the course of a real estate transaction with her husband. During debate, the sponsor offered a floor substitute to include SB 736, relating to the Linked Deposit Program and SB 753, which establishes the Commercial Financing Disclosure Law. Senator Bill Eigel (R-St. Charles) further amended the substitute to include SB 1518, which prohibits any public entity from discriminating or giving preferential treatment to any bidder, offeror, contractor, or subcontractor, when engaged in procuring or letting contracts for any purpose, based on an environmental, social and governance score, as defined in the act. Additionally, the amendment prohibits any limited liability company or corporation from being discriminated against or given preferential treatment based on an environmental, social and governance score, as defined in the act. Senator Lauren Arthur (D-Kansas City) then amended Senator Eigel's amendment to remove the second provision relating to any limited liability company. Senator Doug Beck (D-St. Louis) also amended Senator Eigel's amendment to change references to "contractor, or subcontractor" to "vendor". Senator Rick Brattin (R-Belton) then amended the bill to include language from SB 826, which seeks to prohibit the State of Missouri from accepting payments using central bank digital currency. Lastly, Senator Eigel further

amended the bill to include some provisions from SB 735, specifically exempts all purchases of bullion and investment coins from all state and local sales taxes and requires the State of Missouri to accept gold and silver as legal tender. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

The Senate Insurance & Banking Committee convened Tuesday afternoon to consider passage of SB 826 sponsored by Senator Andrew Koenig (R-Manchester). This bill would prohibit public entities from accepting, or participating in any test of, "central bank digital currencies." The bill also modifies the definition of "money" for purposes of the Uniform Commercial Code to exclude central bank digital currency from its meaning. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 4-1 vote.

**Taxation of Utility Infrastructure** - The Senate dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to debate SB 872, sponsored by Senator Karla Eslinger (R-Wasola). Currently, a taxpayer may deduct from state income tax 100% of any federal grant money received for the purpose of providing or expanding access to broadband internet to areas of the state that lack access. This bill expands the deduction to included state or local grant money and limits the deduction only to money dispersed for this express purpose. During debate, the sponsor amended the bill to include three additional provisions. Specifically, SB 947, which modifies the definition of "video service" for provisions of law relating to video service providers to include the definition of streaming content; SB 1411, which extends the sunset on the Uniform Small Wireless Facility Deployment Act from January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2029; and SB 896, which creates a state and local sales tax exemption for utilities, equipment, and materials used to generate or transmit electricity. Once modified, the Senate provided its first of two necessary approval votes.

The House dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit HB 2142, sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill is the House companion to SB 872, highlighted above. After no further debate, the House passed the bill by a 146-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

The Senate Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy, and the Environment Committee convened Tuesday morning to discuss HB 2057, sponsored by Representative Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield). The bill is the House companion to SB 947, highlighted above and modifies the definition of "video service" for provisions of law relating to video service providers to include the definition of streaming content. Dish Network, DIRECTV, Netflix, and a private citizen supported the bill. The MO Municipal League, along with the city attorney for University City, and an individual opposed the bill. As this bill has been heard before, the chairman limited public testimony and comments.

The Senate Commerce, Consumer Protection, Energy, and the Environment Committee then turned its attention towards SB 1411, sponsored by Senator Karla May (D-St. Louis). The bill is similar to HB 1995, sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins (R-Bowling Green) and seeks to extend the sunset date of the Uniform Small Wireless Facility Deployment Act from January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2029. After no discussion, the committee passed the bill by a 9-0 vote.

### **House Floor Activity**

**Health Care Benefits** - The House dedicated floor time Monday afternoon to debate HB 2082, sponsored by Representative Kurtis Gregory (R-Marshall). The bill provides the MO Farm Bureau and other not for profit organizations the authority to offer affordable and quality health benefits to their members and allows them to work with reinsurance companies and third-party administrators to ensure consumers have access to nationwide network of providers and claims are paid. After a brief debate, the House

provided the first of two necessary approval votes. On Wednesday, the House dedicated floor time to revisit the bill. After no further debate, the House passed the bill by an 104-21 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Financial Transactions** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate HB 2087, sponsored by Representative Mike O'Donnell (R-St. Louis). Currently, certain insurers only offer reimbursement to certain health care providers in the form of prepaid debit cards, with a cumbersome and repetitive opt-out process. This bill would allow health care providers to choose their reimbursement method and would require insurers to get health care provider permission to opt-in to debit card reimbursement. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted that added HBs 1478, modifies money transmissions, 1725, modifies Green bonds, 1726, modifying bond provisions, 2063, commercial financing disclosures, 2086 modifies certain real estate and agricultural loans, 1504, allows candidate & campaign committee electronic payments. The bill was further modified by the addition of amendments which clarified that any fees charged for credit reports were the cost of the reports, made technical changes to candidate and campaign committee electronic payment provisions and clarified language within the money transmissions provisions. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. On Thursday, the House revisited the bill and with no further debate, passed the bill by a 108-13 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Employment Security** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate HB 2098, sponsored by Representative Terry Thompson (R-Lexington). The bill modifies the definition of "wages" to include vacation pay, termination pay, severance pay and holiday pay for the week that it is payable. After a brief debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. On Thursday, the House revisited the bill and with no further debate, passed the bill by a 98-45 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Local Homestead Property Tax Credits** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate HB 2432, sponsored by Representative Wendy Hausman (R-St. Charles). The bill is similar to SB 756, sponsored by Senator Tony Luetkemeyer (R-Parkville). Last year SB 190, which authorized a property tax credit on any property taxes on primary residents for people that are 65 years of age or older and eliminated taxes on social security benefits, was signed into law. There was some confusion once SB 190 passed rather if a person had to qualify for and be eligible to receive social security benefits in order to qualify for the tax exemption. The bill seeks to clarify that any person 62 years, or older, regardless of if they qualify for benefits, is eligible for the tax exemption. Additionally, the bill provides additional clarifications. During bill progression, substitute language combined HB 2482 and HB2543, sponsored by Representatives Ben Keathley (R-Chesterfield) and John Voss (R-Cape Girardeau) into one legislative vehicle. The bill was further amended by Representative John Voss (R-Cape Girardeau) to include new construction and clarify if a property is annexed it would be included in the new taxing district and increased for the following year to accurately reflect taxes owed. Once modified, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. On Wednesday, the House revisited the bill and after a brief debate passed the bill by a 141-2 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Control of St. Louis Police Department** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday morning to debate HB 1481, sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St Louis). The bill restores control of the St. Louis Police Department to the Board of Police Commissioners. During bill presentation, the sponsor stated his intent with the legislation is to create a better foundation for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

because it has been ruined by a political administration, which in turn has contributed to increased crime within the city. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted to remove provisions requiring the State to absorb the cost. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. On Thursday, the House revisited the bill and after a brief debate passed the bill by a 109-36 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**IP Reform** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate HJR 86, sponsored by Representative John Black (R-Maysville). The bill seeks to end the simple majority rule and replaces it with concurrent majority requirements, requires a public forum be conducted by the Secretary of State for initiative petitions and requires those proposing initiative petitions to be U.S. Citizens. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes.

**Property Tax Assessments** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate HJR 78, sponsored by Representative Jeff Coleman (R-Grain Valley). Upon voter approval, this resolution would limit the amount property taxes that may be increased unless certain conditions are met for raising the assessed valuation. Additionally, the resolution exempts taxpayers who reach the age of 65 from any increases. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted to clarify the resolution applies only to residential property, removes the 65-age limit, and requires that the assessor will reassess the property at the point of sale. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. The House revisited the bill on Thursday and with no additional debate, passed the bill by a 104-19 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Ballot Measures Submitted to Voters** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate HJR 86, sponsored by Representative John Black (R-Marshfield). Upon voter approval, the resolution requires a majority vote beyond the 50 plus one simple majority currently required to adopt an amendment to the Missouri state constitution. After a lengthy debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes.

**Officer Resources** - The House dedicated floor time Tuesday afternoon to debate HB 1707, sponsored by Representative Jeff Myers (R-Warrenton). The bill allows the chief law enforcement executive jurisdiction to request assistance from another jurisdiction, including a jurisdiction outside of the State of Missouri. After a brief debate, the House provided the first of two necessary approval votes. The bill was revisited on Thursday, and after a lengthy debate, passed the bill by a 102-37 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Election Integrity and Media Provisions** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday to revisit HB2628, sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). The bill defines “deceptive and fraudulent deepfake” and “synthetic media.” Additionally, the bill prohibits the use of synthetic media against candidates 90 days prior to an election unless a disclaimer is included with the message. During the bill’s progression, substitute language was adopted adding HB 2603, which establishes the “Caller ID Anti-Spoofing Act.” Additionally, language was removed regarding the liability of broadcasting stations and penalty provisions were added. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 133-5 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Eliminating Corporate Income Taxes** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit HB 2274, sponsored by Representative Travis Smith (R-Dora). The bill seeks to eliminate the corporate income tax incrementally over a period of five years, to be fully eliminated by calendar year 2029. After a brief

debate, the House passed the bill by a 100-50 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Earnings Tax** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit HB 1516, sponsored by Representative Jim Murphy (R-St. Louis). The bill seeks to exempt from the city earnings tax all taxpayers whose income is at or below the 150% of the Federal Poverty Level. During the bill's progression, substitute language was adopted to ensure the bill does not apply to Kansas City. After a lengthy debate, the House passed the bill by a 100-47 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Driver's License Modification** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday morning to revisit HB 1413, sponsored by Representative Dan Stacy (R-Blue Springs). The bill would require Missouri driver's licenses to have a distinguishing mark on them to show proof of citizenship. Additionally, beginning July 1st, 2031, in order to vote, their license, in the form of photo identification, must have the distinguishing mark. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted which removed voting requirement provisions from the bill. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 108-46 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Coverage for hearing aids and cochlear implants** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 2626, sponsored by Representative Cameron Parker (R-Campbell). The bill requires MO HealthNet to cover the cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants. During the bill's progression, substitute language was adopted to require the hearing devices to be medically necessary, provided by a certified and/or licensed audiologist, and HB 1918 was added to the title of the bill. After no further debate, the House passed the bill by a 149-3 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Fleeing a Stop** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 1692, sponsored by Representative Justin Sparks (R-Wildwood). The bill establishes "Valentine's Law," which creates the offense of aggravated fleeing a stop or detention of a motor vehicle. Penalties will be a class D felony if the person creates a substantial risk of injury, a class B felony if the person causes physical injury, and a class A felony if the person causes death of another. During debate, the bill was successfully amended to define "speed" as driving 10 mph or more over the posted speed limit and clarifies these provisions do not apply to drivers seeking a safe place to pull over. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 107-25 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Omnibus Utility** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 1746, sponsored by Representative Mike O'Donnell (R-St. Louis). The bill as filed, is a redo of SB 275 from last session ('23) that was originally sponsored by Senator Curtis Trent (R-Springfield) and includes numerous utility provisions that died on the senate calendar last session. Those provisions include the language from HB 1728, would exempt the Public Service Commission from OA purchasing requirements and allows them to directly contract counsel, financial advisors, or other consultants necessary for the Commission to approve the issuance of securitized utility tariff bonds by an electric Investor-owned utility; a state and local sales tax exemption for utilities' equipment, and materials used in the transmission and distribution of electricity; modifies provisions relating to the current renewable energy standards by preventing businesses that use over 100 megawatts of renewable power and have entered into contracts with utilities to be 100% green from being charged twice; provides a uniform accounting practice when assessing taxes for in-ground utility infrastructure; allows consolidated sewer districts' boards of trustees to pay members up to \$100 for each attended meeting; modifies the definition of "large water public utility" to include a

public utility that regularly provides water service, sewer service, or a combination of either to more than 8,000 customer connections; specifies that a large water public utility may file with the Public Service Commission for the purchase of small water systems and requires the PSC to approve the purchase within 6 months, but provides the PSC may request an additional 30 days for good cause showing, if the PSC does not issue a decision within 30 days, the application shall automatically be approved; creates economic discount rates for gas corporations; sets an assessed value for solar property; and reduces fire hydrant inspections to once a year. Finally, the solar property taxation provision was modified by grandfathering in older systems and capping the assessment at appraisal value, plus 5%.

During debate, the bill was further amended. Specifically, the bill now includes:

- HB 2193, which modifies regarding renewable gas
- HB 2541, which relates to deferrals by electrical corporations
- HB 1995, which repeals the expiration dates of “Uniform Small Wireless Facility Deployment Act”
- HB 1622, which allows public utilities to recoup any workforce development investments
- Added language to specify the provisions within the bill only apply to utilities.

After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 119-17 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Branson as Live Entertainment Capital** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 2320, sponsored by Representative Brian Seitz (R-Branson). This bill designates Branson as the Live Entertainment Capital of Missouri. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 107-27 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Sporting Events Tax Credit** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 1483, sponsored by Representative Brad Christ (R-St Louis) The bill provides a tax credit to nonprofit organizations, described as "certified sponsors," that are active members of the Sports Events and Tourism Association. During bill progression substitute language was adopted to remove the increase on the cap. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 94-50 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Offenders Omnibus** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 1777, sponsored by Representative Chad Perkins (R-Bowling Green). The bill modifies several provisions certain offenders. Specifically, the bill addresses incarcerated offenders accessing SNAP benefits, releasing of inmates from the Department of Corrections' procedures, restraints on children in juvenile court, procedures for pregnant inmates and admissibility of certain evidence in criminal cases. During previous debate, the bill was amended by modifying the minimum eligibility for inmate release and the addition of HB 2770 which modifies prison sentences for repeat felony offenders. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 125-33 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**CROWN Act** - The House dedicated floor time Wednesday afternoon to revisit HB 1900 sponsored by Representatives Raychel Proudie (Ferguson). The bill prohibits discrimination on the basis of hair texture and protective hairstyles in educational institutions that receive or benefit from state financial assistance or state student financial aid. Additionally, the definition of “race” in the Human Rights Act is modified to include hair texture and protective hairstyles and further defines “protective hairstyles” to include braids, locks, and twists. During the bill’s progression clean-up language to align the bill with the Senate

companion SB 969 was adopted. After a brief debate, the House passed the bill by a 144-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Master's in Social Work** - The House dedicated floor time to revisit HB 1533, sponsored by Representative Brenda Shields (R-St. Joseph). The bill modifies provisions relating to master's social work degree programs. The bill proposes to allow individuals to obtain a master's degree from a social work program in pre-candidacy phase of accreditation if the program is approved by the council on social work education. During bill progression, substitute language was adopted which clarifies which social work programs qualify and further clarifies individuals must have reached pre-candidacy to qualify. After no debate, the House passed the bill by a 148-0 vote. The bill now will be sent to the Senate for further consideration.

**Election Omnibus** - The House dedicated floor time Thursday morning to revisit HB 2140, sponsored by Representative Peggy McGaugh (R-Carrollton). The bill modifies numerous provisions regarding elections and the election process. Specifically, the bill includes the following provisions:

- Allows electronic notification of election authorities;
- Changes the opening date for filing a declaration of candidacy that is not specified by law or charter for an office in a political subdivision or special district from the 17th Tuesday prior to the election to the 16th Tuesday prior to the election;
- Changes the closing filing date for filing a declaration of candidacy for such offices from the 14th Tuesday prior to the election to the 13th Tuesday prior to the election;
- Specifies that lists of absentee voters with permanent disabilities shall be kept confidential and shall not be posted or displayed in an area open to the public nor shown to any unauthorized person;
- Currently, provisional ballots are available at elections where federal or statewide candidates or statewide ballot measures are on the ballot. This bill makes provisional ballots available at any public election;
- Adds threatening to harm or engaging in conduct reasonably calculated to harass or alarm an election official or a member of one's family as class three election offenses;
- Creates the "Missouri Elections Sovereignty Act". The bill specifies that the State of Missouri reserves the right to determine the time, place, and manner of its own state elections, and declares that any federal laws regulating the same shall apply only to federal elections.

During debate the bill was further amended by removing the sunset from the complaint process for those found to have violated election law, requires the labeling of ballot measures, closes the Hancock Amendment loophole and any ballot measure seeking approval to change, add or modify a tax on real property shall express the effect of the change in terms of real dollars owed per \$100,000. The House passed the bill by a 101-37 vote. The bill now will be send to the Senate for further consideration.