

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®] OF MISSOURI

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LWV Legislative Bulletin April 29, 2019

LWV members are encouraged to personally communicate, as individual voters (not as LWV members), with their legislators on the various legislative bills. Previous issues of the Legislative Bulletin can be found at this link: <https://lwvmissouri.org/legislative-bulletin/>

CLEAN MISSOURI AND ETHICS IN GOVERNMENT

The House gave first round approval to HCS/HJR 48, 46 & 47 (Plocher) on April 23. The House is likely to take up the measure for final passage within the next week. The HCS would significantly undermine the newly approved redistributing reforms approved by voters in Constitutional Amendment 1, also known as CLEAN Missouri.

If approved by voters, the HCS would eliminate the nonpartisan state demographer and move partisan fairness and competitiveness to the lowest priority in the redistricting process. The House also added language that may shift the basis of redistricting away from total population, as is currently the practice in all 50 states. **LWVMO strongly opposes HJR 48.**

ACTION NEEDED - PLEASE CALL, WRITE or send an e-mail to urge your State Senator and State Representative to oppose any attempts to undermine the anti-gerrymandering rules in Missouri's constitution

SENATE APPROVES BUDGET

The Senate approved the SCS versions of House operating budget bills, HBs 1-13 (Smith), on April 24. The bills now return to the House for further consideration and will likely go to conference to resolve the differences between the House and Senate positions. Once the conference committees reach agreement, the final versions of all budget bills must be finally approved in the same form by both chambers no later than May 10.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICS AND SUNSHINE LAW

The Senate Government Reform Committee approved an SCS version of HB 445 (Dogan) on April 24. The SCS version limits lobbyist gifts to elected and appointed local officials, including lobbyist gifts to school board members, incorporates revolving door policies and campaign contribution limits for local officials and changes the Sunshine law. The SCS restricts the revolving door policy to only prohibit registering to lobby the governing body of which the person is a member.

The SCS revises the changes in the Sunshine Law to the language contained in the SCS version of SB 132 (Emery). This language primarily affects records held by legislators and legislative offices and will have little effect on records held by local governments.

The SCS allows legislators to close any records pertaining to "constituent" communications, but this will not apply to any lobbyist, even if they are a constituent. The SCS also allows legislators to close records regarding proposed legislation or the legislative process.

LWVMO is concerned with the impact of these changes to the Sunshine Law.

INITIATIVE PETITIONS

The House gave final approval to HCB 10 (Shaul) on April 23. The HCB bill includes several provisions regarding initiative petitions. The HCB imposes a minimum \$350 refundable filing fee for an initiative petition plus \$25 per page over ten pages. The HCB also includes the provisions of HB 496 (McGaugh) to require the Secretary of State to establish the format for initiative petition signature pages and provide the forms in electronic format. The HCB does not contain a fee per signature requirement. House amendments added language regarding selection of local election judges and requiring that the word count of the language to be listed on a ballot measure.

The following information was provided by the Missouri Budget Project

STATE REVENUE

As you have probably seen, with the arrival of tax day, state general revenue has been recovering. As of April 23rd, general revenue growth was 0.47% compared to last year for the year to date. While we are finally moving into the “black”, the April number is mid-Month and much can change in the course of a couple weeks. We also know that refunds are lower than they were last year. We don’t know how much of the refund decline is due to the withholding table changes or how much might be outstanding and due to taxpayers.

So, while we have moved away from negative numbers this week, state general revenue is not out of the woods yet. It’s important for all of us to help lawmakers understand these dynamics, including:

1. General Revenue may still fluctuate throughout the remainder of this fiscal year – it remains volatile.
2. The Governor’s Budget Proposal for FY 2020 is built on the expectation that Missouri will have \$500 million in unspent funding remaining at the end of the current budget year. For that to happen, general revenue doesn’t simply need to be in the “black” but needs to grow to 1.7% over the previous year.
3. Moreover, over the next several years, Missouri will be implementing tax changes that were already approved by lawmakers but which have not been fully implemented. We have not yet witnessed the full impact of Senate Bill 509 (from 2014), for example.

We're hoping that you can help us help lawmakers understand that the recent **state revenue improvements are not a green light for passage of additional tax cuts. The basic message is the following:**

- Overall, Missouri's current budget situation, already volatile, is likely to worsen as the changes included in Senate Bill 509 are implemented over the next several years.
- Any additional changes to tax policy should help us meet current needs and not stop us from correcting issues when they arise.
- Increases in state General Revenue should be used to address current budget needs and invested in the services in our local communities that help families, communities and the economy thrive.
- This is particularly important as lawmakers are considering paying for highway and bridge repairs from general revenue and we need to ensure that we can pay these additional costs.

TAX ISSUES – EITC

House Bill 548: The bill appears stalled in the House facing much dwindled support. BUT conversations continue in the Senate on developing a compromise on the “Wayfair Fix” that would offset any revenue gains with corresponding cuts. We're hearing rumblings that the EITC has been suggested as a potential offset to any Wayfair revenue gained. While the EITC is definitely preferable to tax cuts for the wealthy, it's important for advocates and lawmakers to understand that for a Missouri EITC to be truly beneficial for families and children it must be **refundable** (the current versions being discussed are non-refundable).

The Missouri Budget Project put together some new resources on the EITC that may be helpful for those of you involved in these conversations. The first of these papers discusses the importance of creating a refundable credit versus a non-refundable credit and can help us make that case to lawmakers.

[**EITC Refundability Would Offset Regressive Taxes for Lower Earning Missourians**](#)

[**State EITC Could Benefit Nearly 30,000 Missouri Grandparents Raising Grandkids**](#)

[**Bolster the Middle Class with an Earned Income Tax Credit**](#)

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The Equal Rights Amendment ratification bill is SCR 7 and it will simply add a line in the Constitution that says that people cannot be discriminated based on their sex alone. This amendment will help strengthen equal pay for equal work laws and give law enforcement more authority to fight against stalking, sexual assault and human trafficking. If we truly believe in individual liberty where each person is born with freedom from arbitrary or unjustified restraint, then the ERA is as American as apple pie, jazz and baseball.

Unfortunately, Sen. Rowden, as chair, did not call for a vote on SCR 7 in the Rules Committee last week, even though he supports it. You might contact friends and family and ask them to contact the senators on the committee. Contact information is provided below:

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