



## House Approves To-Go Alcohol Sales Bill

*Legislation Would Make COVID-19 Waiver Permanent*

The House gave initial approval to legislation this week to permit restaurants to sell to-go cocktails and other alcoholic beverages.

Current law allows restaurant customers to take unfinished bottles of wine home under certain conditions. For this to be permissible, the customer must order a meal, the bottle must be partially consumed on-site, the restaurant must provide a receipt, and the bottle must be resealed and placed in a clear bag. Individuals will not violate open container laws for driving with the unfinished bottle as long as they have the receipt and the bottle remains in the sealed bag.

HB 547, sponsored by Representative Nick Schroer (R-St. Charles), extends these provisions to other alcoholic beverages. The legislation also permits entities licensed to sell liquor by the drink to also sell to-go alcoholic beverages, such as cocktails. There are requirements around the types of containers that must be used, and the container must be placed in a transparent bag or sealed with tamper-proof tape. The patron must order food to receive a to-go beverage, and the restaurant is required to provide a receipt.

The Missouri Hotel and Lodging Association and California Wines supported the bill in committee, saying this would be a lifeline for the struggling restaurant industry. Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and the Missouri Retailers Association opposed the bill. MADD expressed concerns that this could increase the risk of people drinking and driving.

In April, the Division of Alcohol and Tobacco Control waived restrictions on some to-go alcohol sales to help restaurants survive the pandemic with limited indoor dining. The waiver requires food to be purchased with the drink, for a receipt to be provided, and for the alcohol to be placed in a sealed container. This waiver is currently set to expire March 31.



Representative Schroer's bill requires a final floor vote in the House to move to the Senate.

## Dates of Interest

### *January*

- **6** - First Day of Session
- **18** - No Session, Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- **27** - State of the State Address

### *March*

- **1** - Bill Filing Deadline
- **12** - Legislative Spring Break Begins
- **22** - Legislature Reconvenes

### *April*

- **5** - No Session, Easter Break

### *May*

- **7** - Budget Bills Must be Passed
- **14** - Last Day of Session

## House Passes Transparency Bill

The House passed HB 271, sponsored by Representative John Wiemann (R-O'Fallon), to establish the "Missouri Local Government Expenditure Database." This database would be part of the Missouri Accountability Portal and allow the public to view details on local government expenditures to third-party vendors.

The system would be voluntary for municipalities or counties. However, if five percent of registered voters requested that the locality participate, it would become mandatory. For each expenditure, the locality would report the date, purpose, amount, and vendor. Participating municipalities would submit information to the state biannually to be loaded into the database.

In committee, the Missouri Century Foundation, the Missouri Treasurers Office, and the Show-Me Institute spoke in support. Supporters said the measure would increase transparency and centralize information on local government spending. No opposition was voiced at the hearing.

HB 271 passed the House 149 to 2 and will now move to the Senate for consideration. Representative Wiemann's language was truly agreed and finally passed on a local government omnibus bill last year, but it was vetoed due to unrelated provisions.

## News in Brief

- Governor Mike Parson announced changes to the Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) within the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program. ECIP, which is available November through May, pays the minimum amount



needed on a household's energy bill when their fuel source has been shut off or is at risk of disconnection. Beginning this winter, ECIP will pay the maximum disconnect amount (up to \$800) toward eligible households' overdue energy bills.

- The Senate Agriculture Committee will hear a bill on Monday to permit protection orders to be granted to restrain an individual from abusing or threatening a household pet. The legislation is SB 71, sponsored by Senator Elaine Gannon (R-De Soto).
- On Tuesday, the Senate Education Committee will consider SB 204, introduced by Senator Mike Cierpiot (R-Lee's Summit). Starting July 2022, the bill would require all public high schools to offer at least one computer science course. Middle schools would be required to offer instruction in exploratory computer science, and elementary schools would have to teach the basics of computer science concepts.
- This week, the Senate Economic Development Committee will hear SB 367, sponsored by Senator Denny Hoskins (R-Warrensburg). This bill reauthorizes a tax credit for certain expenses related to producing films in the state. Missouri previously had a film tax credit incentive program, which expired in 2013.
- The House Committee on Elementary and Secondary Education will hear legislation to establish procedures for recalling school board members. HB 229, sponsored by Representative Chuck Basye (R-Rocheport), would trigger a recall election upon the submission of a petition signed by a sufficient number of registered voters. The threshold would be 25% of the number of voters who participated in the most recent school board election.
- Governor Parson tweeted that Missouri has reached the milestone of over one million COVID-19 vaccine doses. According to the Governor's press release, Missouri data shows the state reached a peak of 7,616 new cases on November 9. This declined to only 346 confirmed cases on February 15.



*The Way We Work Says It All*