



House Approves Syringe Access Legislation

HB 1486 Permits the Operation of Needle Exchange Programs

The House gave initial approval to legislation permitting the operation of syringe access programs. HB 1486, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Scott City), exempts needle exchange programs registered with the Department of Health and Senior Services from statutes governing unlawful distribution of drug paraphernalia.

Syringe access programs provide clean needles to individuals using intravenous drugs. At least one such program is currently open in the state without clear legal authority. HB 1486 would permit these programs to operate without violating the drug paraphernalia statute.

In committee, supporters argued these programs have proven effective at reducing the spread of disease by providing an alternative to contaminated needles. Proponents also stated research has shown participants are five times more likely to enter substance use treatment. No opposition was voiced in committee.

On the House floor, an amendment was added by Representative Rehder to prohibit syringe access programs from operating within 500 feet of a school building. The legislation needs a final vote in the House to move to the Senate.

In 2019, the syringe access bill passed the House 124 to 27. However, this concept has stalled in the Senate for several years over concerns about encouraging drug use and regulating the placement of programs in communities.

This year, Senator Bill White (R-Joplin) filed a syringe access bill, SB 668. SB 668 was referred to the Senate Health and Pensions Committee, but no hearing has been scheduled.

Dates of Interest

January

- **8** - First Day of Session
- **15** - State of the State Address
- **20** - No Session, Martin Luther King Jr. Day

March

- **20** - Legislative Spring Break Begins
- **30** - Legislature Reconvenes

April

- **13** - No Session, Easter Break

May

- **8** - Budget Bills Must be Passed
- **15** - Last Day of Session

Senate Passes Coroner Training Bill

The Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation addressing training for county coroners. [SB 554](#), sponsored by Senator Jeanie Riddle (R-Mokane), would create the Coroner Standards and Training Commission to establish training standards for operations, responsibilities, and technical skills of a county coroner. SB 554 also adds a dollar fee to death certificates to support training, supplies, and equipment for coroners.

The legislation includes language stipulating that deaths occurring in hospice do not require a coroner investigation if a physician signs that the death was due to disease or natural causes.

In committee, individuals testified about having incomplete or inaccurate information about their loved ones' cause of death due to inadequate training for coroners. There was no opposition testimony in committee.

These provisions were passed by the Legislature last year but vetoed by the Governor due to an unrelated provision on the bill. SB 554 now moves to the House and awaits referral to a committee.

The House version, [HB 1435](#), is sponsored by Representative Dan Houx (R-Warrensburg). HB 1435 passed the House 109 to 43 and has been referred to the Senate Committee on General Laws.

News in Brief

- The Missouri 2020 Census Complete Count Committee [announced](#) it will launch a statewide social media campaign on the importance of responding to the census. Census Day is April 1, 2020. Missourians will begin receiving post cards in mid-March about responding to the census.

- This week the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee heard HB 1345, sponsored by Representative Ben Baker (R-Neosho). This bill would permit school districts to offer elective social studies classes on Hebrew Scripture and the New Testament.
- Legislation regulating the marketing of certain medical marijuana products was heard in the Senate Health and Pensions Committee this week. SB 764, sponsored by Senator Bob Onder (R-Lake St. Louis), prohibits the sale of marijuana-infused edibles that are designed for or marketed to minors.
- The House Children and Families Committee heard legislation that would prohibit the sale of baby crib bumper pads. HB 1271 is sponsored by Representative Sarah Unsicker (D-Webster Groves).
- The Senate Health and Pensions Committee is scheduled to hear SJR 60, sponsored by Senator Tony Luetkemeyer (R-Parkville), on February 26. If approved by both Chambers, SJR 60 would place a proposal before voters to: prohibit health insurance carriers from excluding individuals for pre-existing conditions, subject all Medicaid benefits to appropriations, prohibit Medicaid payments for out-of-state patients, and impose work requirements on Medicaid participants.
- Three bills on compensation for student athletes will be heard in the House General Laws Committee on February 24. Among other provisions, these pieces of legislation permit student athletes to be paid for their name, image, or likeness rights. The bills are: HB 1564, sponsored by Representative Nick Schroer (R-O'Fallon); HB 1748, sponsored by Representative Vic Allred (D-Parkville); and HB 1792, sponsored by Representative Wes Rogers (D-Kansas City).