



Legislature Modifies Session Schedule in Response to COVID-19

Governor Mike Parson Declares a State of Emergency in Missouri

Tuesday evening, House and Senate administrators were notified that a small number of individuals in the Capitol may have been exposed to COVID-19 at a conference in New Orleans the week prior. This served as a catalyst for House and Senate leadership in both parties to consider options for how they might address modifying the session schedule. It is important to note the Capitol building is the center of legislative activity in Missouri and serves as the office for 197 Legislators and their staff as well as all statewide officials except the Attorney General. On any given day, thousands of individuals work at and visit the Capitol, a building constructed in 1917 and designed for just a fraction of this number.

The Legislature was already scheduled for a week-long spring break beginning on March 20. However, both Chambers took measures to modify their schedules in light of concerns over the virus. On Wednesday night, Senate leadership made a bipartisan decision to suspend Senate activities starting on March 13 and extending through spring break. At this time, the Senate is scheduled to reconvene Monday, March 30.

The House will hold a modified schedule the week of March 16 in order to complete their work on the state budget prior to spring break. Therefore, there will be very minimal legislative activity in the coming week. The House's primary order of business is to perfect and third read the state operating budget for SFY 2021. They will also work to pass an extension of the Federal Reimbursement Allowance tax that provides more than \$3 billion to fund the Medicaid program.

The House Budget Committee is scheduled to amend and vote out the budget bills the afternoon of Sunday, March 15. The full House is expected to convene later in the week to vote out the budget bills and send them to the Senate. On March 18, the House Special Committee on Disease Control and Prevention will hold a hearing to discuss Missouri's response to COVID-19. The new schedule is subject to change based on circumstances, and there is certainly a possibility that leadership will further condense the schedule.

The impact of this altered schedule could be significant for non-budget issues. The Legislature is likely to focus its attention on a small number of high-priority items, such as the budget, which will leave little time for the myriad of other issues in the legislative

pipeline. Additionally, there are bound to be discussions regarding revenue estimates for FY 2021 given the slowdown in economic activity, stock market losses, and other factors. We must prepare for the possibility that as the budget moves through the Senate in April, appropriators could be asked to reduce expenditures should forecasts indicate lower revenues. At this point, Missouri is tracking well ahead of revenue estimates. However, these numbers are monitored daily and could change based on lower than expected collections.

On Friday afternoon, Governor Parson declared a state of emergency in Missouri through Executive Order. He said this directive is not meant to close all Missouri schools but that schools should consider recommendations from local health officials. Parson said the state of emergency declaration would provide more flexibility in responding to the virus and open access to \$7 million in state funds, in addition to federal dollars. He also outlined his administration's work with the University of Missouri and Washington University to expand testing capacity. A total of 127 individuals have been tested thus far in Missouri, and five were positive, according to the Department of Health and Senior Services.

We know you are receiving information from a host of sources on COVID-19, and we wanted to share how this is impacting the Missouri Legislature at this point.

Senate Passes Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

For years, legislation has been filed to create a statewide prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) in Missouri. Missouri is currently the only state without a statewide PDMP. However, over 80% of Missourians are covered by the St. Louis County PDMP, which has grown as other municipalities voluntarily joined.

As filed, HB 1693, sponsored by Representative Holly Rehder (R-Scott City), would create a statewide PDMP administered by the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS). The bill would require dispensers to electronically submit information regarding each dispensation of a Schedule II, III, or IV controlled substance. Prescribers would have access to view this information when making decisions about appropriate medications and dosage for a patient.

Supporters of the PDMP bill contend the statewide program will help prescribers identify patients who may be at risk for counteracting medications or for substance misuse. However, conservatives in the Senate have blocked the bill for years, largely over privacy concerns.

HB 1693 passed the House 98 to 56. The bill was taken up on the Senate floor Monday afternoon. Shortly after midnight, the bill was perfected based on a compromise reached between supporters and the Conservative Caucus. In the latest version of HB 1693, data is purged from the PDMP after three years. Instead of housing the PDMP in DHSS, HB 1693 now creates a Joint Oversight Task Force for Prescription Drug Monitoring housed in the

Office of Administration. The Task Force, which is comprised of healthcare providers, would be charged with supervising the collection and use of patient information through the PDMP. The Task Force will contract with a third-party vendor to operate the PDMP.

HB 1693 passed the Senate 21 to 10. The bill requires a final floor vote in the House to move to the Governor's desk.

News in Brief

- The House Children and Families Committee heard HB 2462, sponsored by Representative Dottie Bailey (R-Eureka), to establish the Women's Economic Task Force. They would be charged with discussing and developing recommendations on the following matters as they relate to women's participation and advancement in the workforce: aging, childcare and parenting, primary and secondary education, balancing professional and family responsibilities, and young professionals.
- The Senate Education Committee heard legislation aimed at improving workforce development opportunities in elementary and secondary education. SB 830 is sponsored by Senator Mike Cunningham (R-Rogersville). Among other provisions, it requires all high school seniors' career and academic plans to include a declaration of their plans after high school, such as employment, college, or training.
- Legislation to extend Medicaid benefits for new moms receiving treatment for postpartum depression was heard in the Senate Health and Pensions Committee. SB 788, sponsored by Senator Jill Schupp (D-St. Louis), would extend benefits for eligible women by an additional 12 months.
- The House passed a bill to require the Department of Revenue to accept electronic versions of documents used to verify the residency of applicants for Missouri driver's licenses. HB 1744, sponsored by Representative Chrissy Sommer (R-St. Charles), passed 152 to 2.
- Legislation to ask voters to decide on creating a Missouri Department of Defense was approved by the House 117 to 30. HJR 103 was introduced by Representative Adam Schnelting (R-St. Charles).
- The Senate Committee on Seniors, Families, and Children heard SJR 55, sponsored by Senator Bill Eigel (R-Weldon Spring). If approved by voters, this measure would declare that every parent has a fundamental right to exercise exclusive control over their children's lives without government interference.