



WINTON POLICY GROUP

House Passes Supplemental Budget in the Midst of COVID-19

*Supplemental Budget Includes \$33 Million in Federal Funds
to Respond to the Pandemic*

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Missouri House convened this week and passed the FY 2020 supplemental budget, which is additional funds needed for state operations until the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2020).

The House's stated plan at the start of the week was to pass the supplemental budget as well as the FY 2021 operating budget before leaving for spring break, which was scheduled to begin March 20. The budget is the Legislature's one constitutional duty each session, and the bills are due to the Governor's desk on May 8. The House Budget Committee convened Sunday to amend and vote out the FY 2021 operating budget bills. The expectation was the full House would come in Wednesday to vote on them. However, on Tuesday, Majority Floor Leader Rob Vescovo (R-Arnold) announced that due to uncertainty around revenues and future needs, as well as to prioritize member safety, the House would work on the full budget after they return from spring break.

The full House met on Wednesday and approved the FY 2020 supplemental budget as well as [HB 2456](#), sponsored by Representative Cody Smith (R-Carthage), to extend the provider taxes that are critical to funding the state's Medicaid program. Budget Chair Smith offered an amendment to the supplemental budget, which was adopted, to add \$33 million of federal spending authority for coronavirus preparation and response. He said this number was based on conversations with Governor Parson's administration and their best estimate of how much money Missouri would receive for COVID-19. The original request from the Governor's office was \$13 million, but they increased this by \$20 million for flexibility in the event of additional federal funding. Smith said the Senate could also add in additional spending authority if needed when they take up the supplemental budget bill. Since the Governor declared a state of emergency, the state can also access \$7 million in emergency state funds to respond to the pandemic. However, these are also the funds Missouri would draw on for other emergencies, such as flooding.

Several Democrat members offered amendments, which were defeated, to include additional money for COVID-19. Significant time was spent debating an amendment from

Representative Jon Carpenter (D-Kansas City) to include \$86 million for healthcare infrastructure. The amendment was voted down 47 to 100.

The House adjourned upon completion of the supplemental budget for the Legislature's scheduled spring break, which is set to end March 30. Speaker Elijah Haahr (R-Springfield) said it is unlikely the House will meet the week of March 30. The Senate did not meet this week out of caution for members, staff, and guests, and Senate Majority Floor Leader Caleb Rowden (R-Columbia) sent out an email that their schedule after spring break is still in flux.

On Wednesday, Governor Mike Parson issued an Executive Order providing departments broad authority to waive statutory or regulatory requirements, with the Governor's approval, in response to COVID-19. Specifically, the order waived statutes requiring an in-person assessment before physicians can prescribe via the phone and requiring an existing physician-patient relationship before the use of telehealth. This is in an effort to remove barriers to the use of telemedicine as patients are urged to stay home and to reduce pressure on healthcare systems. The order also waived a statute on hours of service for commercial trucks as well as certain requirements around hours of clinical experience for teacher certification.

Agencies across state government have issued announcements about their responses to COVID-19. The situation is continually evolving, but below is a sample of the measures recently implemented.

- Governor Parson announced on March 20 that an order is forthcoming to limit gatherings of over 10 people. More details will be released tomorrow but it will not apply to hospitals, pharmacies, grocery stores, or state government. He emphasized this is not meant to shut down businesses.
- The Governor announced he directed the Missouri State Emergency Management Agency and the Missouri Department of Economic Development to seek assistance for Missouri businesses through the U.S. Small Business Administration's Economic Injury Disaster Loan program.
- Missouri's April 7 municipal elections have been postponed until June 2, per an Executive Order. This change was also requested by Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft.
- As of March 19, all 555 Missouri school districts/ charter schools reported closures.
- Mo HealthNet has eased restrictions on providing services via telephone to reduce the need for face-to-face interaction with patients.
- The Department of Corrections has suspended visits to state prisons as well as face-to-face office visits for Probation and Parole Officers.
- The Department of Social Services announced the waiver of all work requirements for able-bodied adults without dependents for 90 days.