



## Governmental Services Group

This week the Missouri General Assembly had a very active week for this early in the session. Multiple high-profile hearings were conducted on the House side. Missouri Republicans formally began the push to reinstate a ban on abortion Tuesday night, with a proposed constitutional amendment outlawing the procedure with limited exceptions for victims' rape and incest sponsored by Rep. Melanie Stinnett. This would take the measure back to the voters after the passage of Amendment 3 but would be more forgiving than the outright ban on all abortions that Missouri lawmakers passed in 2019.

The previous ban, which was in place for two years (went into effect in 2022), only permitted abortions in medical emergencies. This is the major issue that I expect will be what grinds the Senate to a halt, as it has been when it was tied to the Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) tax on hospital providers. Even so, things are moving much more quickly than previous sessions with a little more camaraderie so the filibusters could be less cumbersome to a productive year.

Meanwhile, a major push by video lottery terminal interests has advanced a bill to open up VLTs as a legitimate operation in the state. Torch Electronics and other purveyors of unregulated video slot machines that pay out cash prizes would have up to 18 months to convert to regulated lottery games or shut down under a bill approved Monday in a Missouri House committee.

By an 8-5 vote, with several members saying they voted "yes" with reservations, the House Emerging Issues Committee approved a bill sponsored by Rep. Hardwick to authorize video lottery games. I would still expect this to be a major fight on the House side and fully expect this to be drug out in the Senate should it make it to the other side of the building

Lastly, the Senate had two evenings of debate on the perfection of bills. Sen. Cierpiot's SB 4 that included rate increases for utility providers in the state was debated this week and laid over as division between Democrat Senators concerned about the utilities circumventing the PSC process for requested rate increases and some Republicans pushing for these increases. Sen. O'Laughlin had long promised movement on utility/PSC legislation as a top priority and has thus far delivered. It remains to be seen what sort of deal will be struck in this area.

Additionally, Sen. Hough's SB 10 which eliminates the sunset on design-build methods for construction projects was taken up Wednesday and became a sunset-elimination bill with six amendments before it was laid over. The bill would repeal sunsets on the entertainment industry jobs act tax credits, film tax credits, and the whopper: the FRA. This would effectively remove an estimated \$3.4 billion political football from the political process in perpetuity. The slate of newly elected Senate Democrats did have some issues with one provision eliminating the sunset for the ban on transgender medical care for minors. Any deal could fall apart, but at least for now, this bill has a lot of influential parties in support with a fairly functional Senate and could be a peek into how the rest of session will go.

Lastly, in their quest to become the first NFL team to ever secure three Super Bowl wins in a row, the Kansas City Chiefs take on the Philadelphia Eagles at the Superdome in New Orleans. We will all be watching, and we don't want to jinx anything but it could make for a very unproductive week in the Missouri Capitol. Stay tuned and Go Chiefs!

## **Food Labeling Provisions**

**SB 149** (Carter) Currently, the manufacture, sale, or delivery of misbranded foods, as described in statute, in Missouri shall be prohibited. This act modifies the description of misbranded foods to include:

- (1) products containing any bioengineered substance or natural flavoring, unless the product's labeling contains a website link or QR code identifying the bioengineered substance or specific natural flavoring
- (2) edible coatings on fruits or vegetables, unless the label of such food or any display placed at the point of sale contains a disclosure of such coating or a website link or QR code containing the disclosure
- (3) products containing, in whole or in part, cell-cultivated, lab-grown, or insect-based meat or meat alternatives, unless such product is clearly labeled on the front of the package as "LAB-CREATED" or "INSECT-BASED" or a comparable qualifier
- (4) products containing, in whole or in part, meat food products derived from an animal vaccinated with a mRNA-based vaccine, unless the product packaging states "MRNA VACCINATED".

Additionally, this act modifies the fine for the manufacture, sale, or delivery of misbranded foods, among other violations of certain provisions of food, drug, device, and cosmetic safety laws, from a fine of not more than one thousand dollars to a fine of one thousand dollars for each incident or for each prohibited product offered for sale in Missouri.

Testifying in Support: No one testified in support of the bill.

Testifying in Opposition: Missouri Beverage Association, Missouri Retailers Association, Missouri Grocers Association, Associated Industries of Missouri, Missouri Cattleman's Association, Missouri Pork Association, Missouri Biotechnology Institute, Missouri Farm Bureau, Consumer Healthcare Products Association, Missouri Soybean Association, Missouri Corn Growers, Missouri Chamber of Commerce

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