



Governmental Services Group

The Missouri legislature had a short week following the Easter break, with floor activity not resuming until late Tuesday. Consequently, the bulk of legislative business was condensed into Wednesday, the only full working day of the week. With only five weeks remaining in the session, both chambers are focused on third reading and passing bills to ensure they reach the opposing chamber in time for consideration. The state budget remains a primary focus as the May 8th constitutional deadline approaches. The Senate must still move its version of the budget through the Appropriations Committee and the Senate floor before entering conference negotiations with the House to reconcile differences between the two versions.

Significant progress was made on public safety legislation as Governor Mike Kehoe signed SB 888, a comprehensive crime bill that modifies Missouri's criminal and juvenile justice systems. The bill expands the role of prosecutors in juvenile court proceedings and increases access to juvenile records by law enforcement. The new statutes grant prosecuting attorneys expanded authority to petition that juveniles be certified as adults for serious felonies. The legislation establishes a percentage-based parole eligibility system requiring offenders to serve a certain percentage of their sentence before becoming eligible for parole. Additionally, the bill mandates the creation of a juvenile criminal history database for law enforcement, restricts the use of juvenile leg restraints, and removes parole eligibility for specific aggravated sexual crimes. Meanwhile, the Senate passed a bill designed to protect citizens from "SLAPP" suits—Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. This legislation aims to prevent the use of the court system to silence free speech or discourage public testimony through meritless and expensive litigation. The bill provides a mechanism for defendants to seek an expedited dismissal of lawsuits that target their exercise of constitutional rights to free speech. Proponents argue the measure is a necessary safeguard for civic engagement. The bill will now move to the House for further consideration.

Throughout Missouri, Torch Electronics, the state's largest provider of "gray market" slot machines, is suspending its operations as of April 10, 2026, due to an escalating joint investigation by the Missouri Attorney General and the U.S. Department of Justice. This decision marks a major shift after years of legal battles where the company claimed its games were legal because they allowed players to see the outcome before playing. Attorney General Catherine Hanaway characterized the move as a strategic retreat to avoid criminal prosecution, asserting that the machines have always been illegal gambling devices. The suspension of Torch's operations removes a significant source of lobbying pressure and legal ambiguity just as the Senate Select Committee on Gaming considered HB 2989, which would replace these unregulated devices with a licensed, taxed video lottery system overseen by the Missouri Lottery. Proponents of regulation view the shutdown as a validation of their efforts to end the "wild west" of Missouri gambling, potentially clearing a legislative path for formal regulation that was previously stalled by the "gray market" status of these machines.

As the session enters its final stretch, the pace of activity is expected to accelerate. Lawmakers must balance the heavy lift of passing the budget with a crowded calendar of remaining policy priorities. The coming weeks will be defined by floor debates as legislators work to finalize their agendas before the May 15th adjournment, and we expect numerous long nights in the Senate. We will continue to keep you updated on the latest from Jefferson City.

MO Healthnet Work Requirements

HJR 154, sponsored by Representative Chappell, proposes a constitutional amendment relating to MO HealthNet work requirements. This resolution seeks to amend the Missouri Constitution to allow for the implementation of work or community engagement requirements for certain able-bodied adults receiving Medicaid. This bill had a hearing in Senate Families, Seniors and Health.

In support of the bill was FGA Action Support.

In opposition to the bill was Susan G Komen, AARP, Missouri Budget Project, Community Health Commission of MO, American Cancer Society, Suzanne's Mental Health Wellness LLC, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, American Heart Association, Health Forward Foundation, Missouri Association of County Developmental Disability Services, and Reach Foundation.

MHA testified for informational purposes on the bill.

Food is Medicine Act

SB 1499, sponsored by Senator Mosley, creates the "Food is Medicine Act." This act explores the integration of nutrition-based interventions into the healthcare system, specifically for individuals with chronic conditions impacted by diet.

This bill had a hearing in Senate Families, Seniors and Health.

In support of the bill was American Heart Association, Empower Missouri, Health Forward Foundation, and Reeding MO.

There was no opposition to the bill.

Patient Privacy

HB 2606, sponsored by Representative Caton, creates provisions relating to the privacy rights of patients. This legislation establishes new protections or strengthens existing laws regarding how patient medical data is stored, shared, and accessed by third parties.

This bill had a hearing in House Health and Mental Health.

In support of the bill was Citizens Council for Health Freedom and Amorvine.

In opposition to the bill was MHA, Missouri State Medical Association, and Washington University.

Tobacco Regulations

HB 2085, sponsored by Representative Keathley, modifies provisions relating to tobacco product regulations. This legislation updates state statutes regarding the sale, distribution, and taxation of tobacco and nicotine-related products. This bill specifies that the State of Missouri must preempt the sale of tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, and vapor products. This preemption will include local ordinances that deal with: (1) Ingredients; (2) above; and setting the age to sell or purchase at 21 years of age and (3) Licensing and products bans.

In addition, existing state regulations on the sale of tobacco products to minors found in Sections 407.924 through 407.934, RSMo, will supersede any local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations enacted by a county, municipality, or other political subdivision regulating the sale of tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, or vapor products.

The bill does not prohibit counties, municipalities, or other political subdivisions from enforcing ordinances or regulations that set the age to sell or purchase tobacco products, alternative nicotine products, and vapor products to individuals under 21 years of age.

This bill will not apply to any local laws, ordinances, orders, rules, or regulations enacted by a county, municipality, or other political subdivision prior to January 1, 2026.

This bill was voted out of the Senate General Laws Committee DO PASS.

Licensure Reciprocity

HB 2974, sponsored by Representative Stinnett, modifies provisions relating to licensure reciprocity. This legislation is designed to simplify the process for professionals licensed in other states to obtain Missouri credentials, thereby supporting workforce development.

This bill was voted out of the Senate Economic and Workforce Development Committee DO PASS.

Designated Health Care Decision-Maker Act

SB 1536, sponsored by Representative Black, establishes the Designated Health Care Decision-Maker Act, which authorizes certain persons to make health care decisions for certain incapacitated persons. This bill provides a legal framework for identifying individuals who can act on behalf of patients when they are unable to communicate their own medical wishes.

This bill was voted out of the Senate Families, Seniors and Health Committee DO PASS.

