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Capitol Report January 24th, 2019

I have filed several bills this session, so I will provide some quick summaries of each for the next few weeks.

HB 573 concerns Title IX litigation, specifically allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault. This bill would insure that all parties are fairly represented in the process, and that legal principles, specifically due process are applied. This is common sense legislation that has been applied in other states and is designed to make certain that all incidents of misconduct are taken seriously and fairly. If you would like to read more, please go to Missouri Times to read my opinion piece on the subject and the bill: <https://themissouritimes.com/56881/opinion-title-ix-investigations-are-medieval-in-their-lack-of-due-process/>.

This bill has a companion bill HB 574 that would enact some legal language changes.

House Passes Bill to Create the Cloria Brown Memorial Highway (HB 448 & 206)

The first bill passed by the Missouri House of Representatives for the 2019 session is meant to honor one of the state's most dedicated public servants, and my former colleague. House members gave overwhelming support this week to a bill that would name a section of road in St. Louis County as the Cloria Brown Memorial Highway. Brown, who worked tirelessly as a state representative to help some of the state's most vulnerable citizens, passed away in March of 2018 during her third term in office.

As members discussed the bill on the House floor, they talked about the positive impact Brown had on her district and the state. The sponsor of the bill told her colleagues, "During her time in the Missouri House, Representative Brown worked tirelessly to help women, children, and the most vulnerable. She was a champion of veterans and worked on many levels on human trafficking issues. She was very committed to her citizens and district." Other colleagues noted that "she was conscientious, she was committed, and she was caring" and that "she was a friend to almost every single person who had the pleasure of meeting her." I certainly feel the same as these representatives.

The legislation that now moves to the Senate for consideration would name a section of South Lindbergh Boulevard from Interstate 55 to Lin Ferry Drive in her honor. The section of road runs past the cemetery at St. Johns Evangelical United Church of Christ where Brown was laid to rest. Another summed up the need to pass the bill by saying, "I can think of no greater honor than what we are doing here today on our House floor to honor her memory, to honor her work and her time with us."

House Budget Committee Learns Details of Tax Withholding Error

Members of the House Budget Committee spent time this week questioning the Missouri Department of Revenue about issues that could result in thousands of Missourians receiving a smaller than expected tax refund, or even owing a small amount in taxes to the state.

Committee members learned that two issues have led to many Missourians not withholding enough from their paychecks, which has in turn caused state revenues to fall behind and create a more than \$500 million budget hole. The first issue is an error in the state's withholding formula that has actually existed for 15 years. The problem was amplified this year by the second issue, which are the changes made by the 2017 federal tax reforms.

The issues first surfaced when state revenues began to dip and House budget leaders contacted the department with concerns about a potential error in their formula. Department officials began poring through data and the withholding tables used by employers to approximate how much state income tax employees should have withheld from each paycheck. In doing so, the error was eventually revealed. It was quickly pointed out that the error didn't change a single Missourian's tax liability, but impacted the size of refunds if they anticipated receiving a tax refund check.

During the hearing, Budget Committee members were very critical of the department's failure to properly communicate the issue with Missouri taxpayers. Members of the committee said the department should have done a better job in publicizing the error with the state-formulated withholding tables in an effort to avoid any surprise bills for taxpayers.

Lawmakers said they are focused now on determining the impact the two issues will have on Missouri taxpayers, and communicating this information with Missourians so they are less surprised when they do their tax returns this year. Revenue department officials also remain optimistic that once the tax season moves forward, revenues will catch up with the growth that was anticipated and the \$500 million shortfall will be eliminated.

The House Budget Committee will continue to monitor the situation closely and plans to hold an additional hearing next week to obtain more information. I will keep you informed on this important matter.



This week I attended the Joint Committee on Education's legislators retreat on enhancing K-12 education and workforce readiness. It proved to be an informative conference, and provided some useful perspective for reform of career readiness as the legislative session moves forward. The co-chairs were Senator Gary Romine and Representative Kathy Swan.

Serving the Constituents of the 51st District,

State Representative

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