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Capitol Report February 21st, 2019

Once again we were at the Capitol this week. The legislative process is certainly in full swing. I am glad to report that my HCR 16, asking Congress to officially recognize the Ghost Army unit of World War II. Six Missourians have been identified as part of this unit which used creative tactics to feed misinformation to the German forces as the Allies pushed to the Rhine River (1944-5). Thanks to everyone on the Veterans Committee for their unanimous vote to pass the resolution further through the process!

House Approves Sentencing Reform Bill (HB 113)

Members of the Missouri House of Representatives gave their stamp of approval this week to legislation that would give judges greater discretion when sentencing non-violent offenders. The bill is meant to both help non-violent offenders get a second chance, and to slow the growth of Missouri's prison population.

The bill would allow judges to issue sentences below Missouri's current minimum sentencing requirements except in crimes that involved the use, attempted use, or threat of physical force, or certain non-consensual sex crimes against a minor. A case would have to have a "substantial and compelling" reason the minimum sentence would be unjust to the defendant or would not be needed to protect the public.

Legislative projections indicate the bill would save the state more than \$3 million per year by the time it is fully implemented by decreasing the number of people incarcerated in state prisons. The savings do not account for what the state would save if it does not have to build and maintain two new prisons.

The bill is now goes to the Missouri Senate.

House Approves "Closing Fund" Legislation (HB 255)

House members approved legislation that would give the Missouri Department of Economic Development an additional tool to bring new jobs to Missouri. The bill would modify an existing state program to establish a closing fund the department can use to make agreements with companies to create new jobs in the state.

The bill would enhance the existing Missouri Works Program, which helps businesses access capital through withholdings or tax credits to embark on facility expansions and create jobs. The legislation would allow a little more than 20 percent of the program to be devoted to a closing fund that would allow the department to offer tax credits within a year of closing a deal that requires a business to meet certain job creation criteria. Under the plan, a qualified company could receive a tax credit of up to 9 percent of new payroll issued within one year as long as the company creates 10 or more jobs that pay 100 percent or more of the county average wage. The program would be capped at \$25 million and reevaluated every two years.

The bill now moves to the Senate for consideration.

Legislation Approved to Lift Hospice Care Death Investigation Requirement (HB 447)

Legislation approved by the Missouri House and now under consideration by the Senate would lift the requirement, under certain circumstances, that the death of a person under hospice care be investigated.

Supporters of the bill say the Missouri law requiring coroners and medical examiners to investigate a death in a home doesn't account for the increase in the use of hospice care for terminal patients.

The legislation would allow the physician treating a patient or the hospice director to certify when a patient has died due to natural causes relating to a disease or known illness. A coroner or medical examiner must be notified within 24 hours of such a death.

Protecting Victims of Domestic Violence (HBs 243 & 544)

Another bill sent to the Senate this week by the House would make changes to Missouri's landlord-tenant laws in an effort to better protect victims of domestic violence.

The legislation aims to address an issue that sometimes occurs when a person is trying to get out of a domestic violence situation and needs to find a place to live. If that person is under a lease agreement, property owners are under no legal obligation to release that person. This could have lasting repercussions both financially and in finding another place to live.

This legislation is meant to help victims find a safe place to live. It would prevent anyone at risk of domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking from being evicted, being denied tenancy, or violating a lease agreement as a result of that risk. Anyone who is a victim, or is in imminent danger of being victimized, would be able to use this as a defense if a landlord takes them to court. The bills would establish what evidence a landlord must accept as proof of such situations.

Other Bills Third Read and Sent to the Senate This Week

HB 283 extends the geologic resources fee collected by the Department of Natural Resources for a surface mining permit from December 31, 2020 to December 31, 2025. Supporters say the bill extends the fee used by the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Geologic Survey to collect and publish information relating to the location and quality of minerals in the state.

HB 214 updates Missouri's competitive bidding process and increases the amount necessary to issue a request for proposal. The sponsor said the bill would update threshold numbers for the bidding process for the first time since 1995. The goal is to "make it easier for the administration to purchase needed items of a noncontroversial nature in small value amounts." The bill would require all state purchases in excess of \$10,000 to be based on competitive bids with specified exceptions. Under current law, all state purchases in excess of \$3,000 must be based on competitive bids. The bill also requires the Commissioner of the Office of Administration to advertise and solicit bids on any state purchase with an estimated expenditure of \$100,000 or more. Currently, the commissioner must advertise and solicit bids on any state purchase with an estimated expenditure of \$25,000 or more. The bill also would authorize the commissioner to hold reverse auctions for the purchase of merchandise, supplies, raw materials, or finished goods if price is the primary factor evaluating bids.

HB 77 updates provisions related to teacher and employee retirement systems. The bill is meant to fix a problem with language that was passed last session. It will add a provision that exempts anyone that retired as a teacher under the public school retirement system who is now employed by a public community college.

HB 324 creates the offense of unlawful use of an unmanned aircraft near a correctional center or a mental health hospital. The offense of unlawful use of an unmanned aircraft near a correctional center or mental health hospital would be a class A misdemeanor unless the person uses the unmanned aircraft for the purpose of: (1) Delivering a weapon or other article that may be used in such a manner to endanger the life of an offender or correctional center or mental health hospital employee, in which case it is a class B felony; (2) Facilitating an escape from confinement, in which case it's a class C felony; or (3) Delivering a controlled substance, in which case it is a class D felony.

HB 321 is meant to protect the citizens of St. Joseph from having to foot the bill to maintain neglected properties. The legislation would add new layers of transparency and accountability to ensure property owners pay for upkeep rather than the city and taxpayers. The bill would simply make the property owner's information known to the city so that the city has someone to hold responsible for the maintenance, appearance, and upkeep of the property.

HB 402 allows that when following certain criteria drivers may turn left after stopping at a red light for one-way streets. Supporters say most other states have this rule which is just as safe as the right turn on red rule given the configuration of one-way streets specified in the bill.

Serving the Constituents of the 51st District,



State Representative

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