



Missouri



## **Missouri End of Session Wrap-Up**

*The 2009 Legislative Session*

### **Health Care**

#### ***Background:***

At the beginning of the session, [Governor Jay Nixon](#) proposed increasing health coverage in Missouri through two programs.

#### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

##### **CHIP**

The Governor proposed decreasing the premiums paid by families who have their children enrolled in the state Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) and increasing funding for outreach and enrollment. Through the Federal SCHIP Reauthorization Act, required state funds would have been less than \$23 million. Unfortunately, this idea fizzled in the House and never recovered in the Senate.

##### **MO HealthNet Expansion for Parents**

While the proposed CHIP expansion would have cost very little General Revenue, the Governor worked with Missouri hospitals to do even better on the expansion for custodial parents. Through an increase in the Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA), the health providers would pay the State's share for the expansion up to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level. Since this expansion only required spending authority, it was included in the Governor's State Budget.

##### **Show Me Healthcare**

[Senator Tom Dempsey](#) (R-23) sponsored [Senate Bill 306](#), the legislative vehicle for Show Me Healthcare. The legislation included a framework for a multi-year expansion in coverage for lower income adults.

Unfortunately, Show Me Healthcare was bogged down in the House and changed from a

Medicaid program with Federal matching dollars and FRA to an expansion of the High Risk Pool, which would have neither funding source.

After several tries by the Senate to urge the House Majority to take up the issue, the final vehicle for expansion was not brought up in the House on the final day of the regular session – and virtually died because of inaction.

---

### **Utilities**

#### ***Background:***

Everyone cares what next month's utility bills may be, but for people who live on a fixed income, a spike in their utilities can be a life changing event.

#### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

##### **CWIP**

AmerenUE proposed a repeal of the statute passed by voters that does not allow companies to increase their rates up front to pay for the construction of a power plant. The utility company proposed using the statute change to pay for a new nuclear power plant in Calloway County.

The repeal, along with the many other provisions of the bill, would have moved all the risk for construction of the plant from AmerenUE and to their customers. It was estimated that this risk shift would have increased electric rates between 20%-40%.

Working together with other utility customer groups, AARP was able to prevent passage of the repeal of CWIP.

## **Budget**

### ***Background:***

At the beginning of the Legislative Session, House Budget Committee [Chairman Allen Icet](#) (R-84) was determined to not use Federal Economic Recovery Funds in the State Budget. This led to a House Budget that included hundreds of millions of dollars of cuts to core services.

### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

The Senate Appropriations Committee, led by [Senator Gary Nodler](#) (R-32), first divided Federal funds into two separate state funds called the Budget Stabilization Fund and the Economic Stimulus Fund. Through use of the Budget Stabilization Fund in the State Budget, the Senate restored many of the House Budget cuts.

The Conference Committee discussion on the Budget came down to one major contentious item: language for Healthcare expansion.

The Senate supported allowing the funds to be used either to expand coverage through a MO HealthNet expansion or through the Show Me Healthcare program included in SB 306. The House supported only allowing funding through SB 306.

The first compromise position, which contained the Senate language, was reached without the support of the House Republicans on the committee and went to the House Floor for approval. The House rejected this compromise on mostly partisan lines. Only four Republicans: Representatives [Denny Hoskins](#) (R-120), [Scott Largent](#) (R-38), [Ryan Silvey](#) (R-141), and [Jay Wasson](#) (R-141); and all Democrats voted in favor of the Senate language.

Upon failure of the first Conference Committee Report, a new report was issued that required passage of SB 306 before the funding would be made available.

The House Republicans did not grant a Conference Committee to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions until there was insufficient time left in session to approve a report.

---

## **Voter ID Requirements**

### ***Background:***

Photo ID requirements for voting create obstacles for groups of otherwise eligible voters, including persons who are older, low-income, disabled, minority, foreign-born or geographically isolated. Many people neither own nor drive a car and thus lack drivers' licenses. When alternative state-issued ID cards are offered, mobility, language and other difficulties can limit people's ability to get one.

### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

[House Joint Resolution \(HJR\) 9](#), introduced by [Representative Stanley Cox](#) (R-118), would have amended the Missouri Constitution to require a state-issued photo ID to vote – with no exceptions.

After several weeks in committee, the sponsor introduced new language that allowed people born before 1941 and people with disabilities to vote a provisional ballot if they could not show photo identification. However, identities would then be verified by matching signatures on file. This was a concern because signatures change drastically over time and obviously, signatures on file with election authorities could be decades old.

HJR 9 was voted out of the Elections Committee but was never brought up for debate on the House Floor.

Bottom line: not passed.

## **TABOR and Fair Tax**

### ***Background:***

TABOR, a spending and revenue cap that was passed in the State of Colorado, has become synonymous with failed fiscal policy. In Colorado, TABOR led to drastic cuts across the board - education, higher education, healthcare, and transportation all suffered. All of this in a state that started from a significantly better fiscal position than Missouri is currently in.

### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

The so-called "Fair Tax" proposal would have eliminated the state's income tax and replaced the funding with a tax on every good or service purchased in the state. This tax would have extended to health services, long term care, and even utility and phone bills. The Missouri Budget Project estimated that in order to fill the void from removing the income tax, this new tax would have to be at least 10%.

Both of these proposals had a wide range of opposition and at the end of session, they both languished in the Senate Ways and Means Committee where no votes were taken.

---

## **Senior Investor Protection Act**

Included in the Omnibus Crime Bill was the Senior Investor Protection Act. This act, sponsored by [Senator Tim Green](#) (D-13) and supported by [Secretary of State Robin Carnahan](#), will deter and punish those who attempt to defraud seniors.

The act creates a penalty of \$50,000 for investment fraud committed against seniors over the age of 65, or people with disabilities. It also allows for restitution of the lost funds and a civil penalty of up to \$5,000.

## **Missouri Housing Trust**

### ***Background:***

When the housing crisis hit Missouri, there was only one state program to prevent foreclosures and homelessness, but that program, the Missouri Housing Trust Authority, had been under-funded for over a decade.

### ***Missouri Legislative Action:***

[Senator Jolie Justus](#) (D-10) introduced legislation to correct this problem by adding a \$7 fee charged when purchasing property. Due to strong opposition by the Association of Realtors, Home Builders Association, and mortgage bankers, Senators worked out a compromise to lower the fee to \$2. The opposition from the Association of Realtors continued.

In Conference Committee with the House, the fee was dropped to 50¢. The lobbyist for the realtors, however, still opposed this increase and the entire bill was killed on the House floor.

---

## **Preneed Funeral Products**

Spurred by the implosion of a St. Louis business, National Preneed Sellers (now under FBI investigation) [Senate Bill 1](#) established licensing and contract requirements for preneed funeral contract sellers, providers, and seller agents, was passed this year.

Under this new law, companies offering prearrangements for funeral services must keep enough cash on hand to meet 85 percent of their commitments.