

# 2014 MML LEGISLATIVE WRAP UP

by Richard Sheets

The 2014 legislative session began with a flurry of activity as leadership in both the House and Senate pushed to re-enact the 2013 **wireless communication legislation** that was held to be invalid by the courts. After several very contentious committee hearings, where municipal officials from across the state testified that deregulation of the wireless industry was unnecessary and potentially harmful to Missouri communities, the General Assembly hastily re-adopted most of the 2013 wireless legislation that was thrown out.

Once the wireless legislation was Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed, the House and Senate settled down to work on the budget and proceeded with deliberations on the other 1,800 bills that had been filed. Many of the remaining bills had a direct impact on municipalities. Due to the many contacts made by municipal officials to their legislators, the League was successful in removing a **municipal sales tax exemption** for the utilities and equipment used in the preparation of food from **HB 1865**. The League also was successful in preventing the passage of **SB 843** that would have imposed new onerous and unclear **Open Meetings and Records Law** provisions. The legislature also failed to pass legislation to prohibit **breed-specific dog ordinances** (**HB 1116** and **SB 865**) and to prohibit the use of **red light traffic enforcement cameras** (**HB 1976**). However, legislation that would have clarified the law regarding the use of **red light traffic enforcement cameras** (**HB 1557**) did not pass. Missouri Municipal League staff will review all

Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed bills to determine whether legal action or model ordinances/policies are needed.

## GOV. NIXON PRESERVES ESSENTIAL MUNICIPAL SERVICES FOR MISSOURIANS

The Missouri Municipal League greatly appreciated Gov. Nixon's veto of harmful bills that would have significantly diminished voter-approved municipal sales tax revenues, forcing cuts to essential local services for Missouri citizens across the state.

The bills vetoed by the Governor include SB 584, SB 693, SB 662, SB 612, SB 829, SB 727 and HB1455. Harmful provisions in these bills were added during the final hours of the 2014 legislative session without providing the chance for adequate review.

MML opposed these bills for the following reasons:

- The bills provided local sales tax exemptions for a variety of unrelated activities, from data processing to recreation park admissions.
- Municipalities would lose millions of dollars in revenue that is needed for basic services that citizens expect and demand, such as police and fire protection, parks, streets and more.
- The harmful provisions in these bills were added during the final hours of the 2014 legislative session. This means that there was no chance for adequate review of the impact of these exemptions.
- The monetary impact of these

bills could be substantially higher than estimated. Some municipalities may have seen a greater impact from these bills due to the makeup of their local economy.

- These local sales taxes were voted on and approved by citizens to fund specific local services. These exemptions would have diminished the amount of revenue going to these popular services.
- Some of the revenue lost could have jeopardized local bond commitments, leaving communities vulnerable to default.

## DIMINISHING LOCAL REVENUE THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTION

As this and past legislative sessions have shown, municipal governments are under attack by special interests who want to be exempted from local taxes and regulations. We do not see this trend ending anytime soon. As the political rhetoric about smaller government, lower taxes and fewer regulations intensifies in Jefferson City, it will be incumbent upon all municipal officials to demonstrate to legislators that (at least at the municipal level) regulations and taxes are not excessive and are supported by citizens. It also is critical that we educate state legislators on the connection between local taxes and local services, as well as the connection between local regulations and quality of life in our communities. □

**Richard Sheets** is the Deputy Director of the Missouri Municipal League. Contact him at 573-635-9134 or [Rsheets@mocities.com](mailto:Rsheets@mocities.com).

# MIRMA

Missouri Intergovernmental Risk Management Association

Phone: 573.817.2554

Web: [www.mirma.org](http://www.mirma.org)

Missouri's First Municipal Self Insurance Pool

### BENEFITS:

One comprehensive package!  
Proactive loss prevention training  
On-site safety training  
Annual police firearms training  
Risk Management Grant Program  
Aquatic audit reimbursement  
Police accreditation reimbursement  
Seminars & workshops  
Video library

### COVERAGE:

Workers' Compensation  
Property  
General Liability  
Public Officials Liability  
Employment Practices Liability  
Law Enforcement Liability  
Automobile  
Boiler & Machinery  
Airport