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Week 9: House Steps on the Gas, Senate Pumps the Breaks

The Missouri General Assembly has completed its ninth week of session and are now focusing more time and attention to floor debate. This week the House debated and passed numerous bills on the House floor on topics such as motor vehicle registration, eminent domain, unemployment taxes, and tort reform. The Missouri Senate perfected several non-controversial bills and had limited activity this week on any major issues. In fact, the Senate did not work late this week and adjourned on Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. There are approximately 10 working weeks remaining in the 2021 legislative session, and many priority bills remain untouched. The legislature will return on Monday at 4 p.m. and will begin its annual spring break upon adjournment next Thursday, March 11.

DEADLINE PASSES FOR FILING BILLS
Members of the Senate and the House ended their filing of bills on Monday for the 2021 legislative session. The House filed 1,449 bills and 64 House Joint Resolutions (constitutional amendments). The Senate filed 630 bills and 29 Senate Joint Resolutions. That's a total of 2,172 bills.

GOVERNOR RELEASES $280 MILLION HE HAD WITHHELD
On Monday, Governor Mike Parson announced he was releasing more than $280 million of FY21 general revenue he had restricted months ago. The Governor said due to the financial impact of COVID-19, the state previously had withheld about $438 million in FY 21 spending to balance its budget. However, due to the state's stronger than projected financial position, Governor Parson released more than $38 million in general revenue in October 2020 and $119 million in January 2021. The remainder of the restrictions were released Monday. To view a full breakdown of those funds released Monday, **click here**.

UNEMPLOYMENT OVERPAYMENTS BILL MOVES TO SENATE
On Thursday, the House third read and passed HCS HB 1083, et al (Eggleston, R-Maysville), a bipartisan bill that would allow the Department of Labor to forgive non-fraudulent overpayments of unemployment benefits grants through the federal CARES Act or other federal programs designed to provide employment security relief. Reportedly, some 46,000 Missourians received overpayments averaging $4,000 and were told to repay them.

Committee Activity

House Bill 373 (Hannegan, R-St. Charles) modifies provisions relating to offenses against animals by requiring courts to order a person found guilty of animal abuse to attend a comprehensive mental health evaluation conducted by a licensed mental health professional prior to the person's sentencing. Additionally, the bill creates the offense of animal neglect if the person has a hoarding disorder causing the accumulation of custody or ownership of animals. Hearing held March 4 in the House Local Government Committee. During bill presentation, the sponsor indicated he is currently drafting substitute language to include HB 276, establishes an animal abuse registry. MO Alliance for Animal Legislation and Missouri Veterinary Medical Association supported the bill. No opposing testimony was presented during the hearing.

House Bill 508 (Rone, R-Portageville) changes the penalties for releasing any swine to live in the wild or possessing or transporting certain live wild boar without a permit to a class E felony. The bill also changes the term "feral hog" to "feral swine" and specifies that any person who kills a feral swine outside without the consent of the landowner or not in compliance with certain requirements is guilty of a class A misdemeanor. The House Agriculture Policy Committee took up HB 508 in executive session on March 2. A substitute clearing up issues of private vs. public land and transportation of domestic swine was adopted and the resulting HCS HB 508 was voted do pass by a vote of 14-1.

House Bill 922 (Houx, R-Warrensburg) modifies the statute of limitations for personal injury claims from five years to two years. Substitute language was adopted including uninsured motorists to the statute and drops the statute of limitations from ten years to two years. The House Rules-Legislative Oversight Committee voted HCS for HB 922 do pass by a vote of 7-3.

House Bill 948 (Francis, R-Perryville) extends the Meat Processing Facility Investment Tax Credit for the expansion or modernization of meat processing facilities from December 31, 2021 until December 31, 2027. On March 1 the House Rules-Administrative Oversight Committee voted HB 948 do pass by a vote of 13-0.

Senate Bill 71 (Gannon, R-DeSoto) provides that adult protection orders and child protection orders, full or ex parte, may be granted to restrain or enjoin an individual from committing or threatening to commit abuse against a pet. A protection order may include an order of custody of the pet where appropriate, as well as any funds needed to cover the medical costs resulting from abuse of the pet. "Pet" is defined in this act as a living creature maintained by a household member for companionship and not for commercial purposes. The Senate Agriculture, Food Production and Outdoor Resources Committee took up SB 71 in executive session on March 1 and a substitute changing the word “custody” to “possession” was adopted. The substitute, SCS SB 71 was voted do pass.

Senate Bill 107 (Crawford, R-Buffalo) would allow a village, town, city, or county to prohibit dogs from running at large or to further control or regulate dogs within its boundaries so long as the ordinance, order, policy, or regulation is not breed specific. On March 3, the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee voted Do Pass on SB 107 by a vote of 6-0.

Senate Bill 180 (Luetkemeyer, R-Parkville) requires that any state agency adopting or amending a rule shall rescind a rule that is unnecessary, obsolete, or burdensome. Hearing held March 2 in the Senate General Laws Committee. During bill presentation, the sponsor informed committee members as of November 2020, there were approximately 5,800 administrative rules promulgated by Missouri Agencies and stated the rules result in confusion and bureaucratic red tape, that impede innovation and kill jobs. The sponsors intent with the legislation is to reduce government regulations on local businesses and indicated that he is currently drafting substitute language to exempt promulgated rules enacted by a board under professional registration. NFIB and MO Realtors Association provided supporting testimony. No opposing testimony was presented during the hearing.

Senate Bill 308 (Koenig, R-Manchester) Currently, certain professional licensing authorities are exempt from a requirement in the Fresh Start Act of 2020 that authorizes

individuals with a criminal record to petition the state licensing authority for a determination of eligibility for licensure despite the criminal record. The bill will require the state licensing authority to inform a person if they meet the required qualifications to obtain a license based on their criminal background before they pay any fees associated with licensure. On March 1 the Senate Professional Registration Committee held an executive session where SCS for SB 308 was voted do pass by a vote of 7-0. The substitute adds a requirement to the petition process that a person shall be notified in writing of the grounds and reasons when a licensing authority determines the person is disqualified from licensure; and repeals the requirement that licensing authorities list only criminal convictions directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the licensed occupation.

Senate Bill 441 (Washington, D-Kansas City) establishes the Missouri Food Security Task Force, to be comprised of 23 members. The task force shall report a summary of its activities and recommendations to the General Assembly before August 28, 2022, and shall terminate on January 1, 2023. Hearing held on March 3 in the Senate Committee on Seniors, Families, Children, and Military Affairs. The Missouri Coalition for The Environment, Operation Food Service, Missouri State Alliance of YMCAs, Feeding Missouri, Paraquad, Missouri Can and several others testified in support, and there was no opposition.

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Tracking Report

Upcoming Hearings

House-Rules-Legislative Oversight
03/08/2021 12:00 PM
Committee Hearing, HR 4

Executive Session:
HB519 Knight, Jeff - Modifies provisions relating to landowner liability

Senate-Agriculture, Food Production, and Outdoor Resources
03/08/2021 2:30 PM
Committee Hearing, SCR 2

SB490 Bernskoetter, Mike - Modifies provisions relating to the family farm livestock loan program

House-Conservation and Natural Resources
03/08/2021 5:00 PM or upon adjournment
Committee Hearing, HR 3

HB140 Pietzman, Randy - Requires the department of conservation to give at least one warning before imposing a penalty within the first two years of promulgation of the penalty

House-Local Government
03/11/2021 8:30 AM
Committee Hearing, HR 7

Executive Session:
HB373 Hannegan, Tom - Modifies provisions relating to offenses against animals

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