



State Representative  
Mark A. Sharp  
District 37

**Dear Neighbor,**  
**It is a new year and a new legislative session for the Missouri General Assembly and there will be plenty of topics to highlight as we progress through this year's session.**

**After ending the year with a new homicide record I felt that it was important on the first day of session that I be recognized by the House Speaker to make a point of personal privilege to acknowledge the 182 homicide victims we suffered in Kansas City, MO, and all homicide victims across Missouri in 2023 in a moment of silence.**

**There wasn't much legislative business taking place last week outside of some committees meeting to handle procedural**

**business. However, the House Speaker did create a new Special Committee on Education Reform which I have been appointed Ranking Minority Member to. On this committee I will certainly stand up for public education, especially Kansas City area school districts. There are also rumblings of another Special Committee on Property Tax Reform which I've requested to be appointed to as well.**

**Blair's law has been re-filed by me along with Republican Representative Sherri Gallick out of Cass County to continue to show the bipartisan support for this important legislation. To my understanding the Crime Prevention and Public Safety Committee that I sit on will be repackaging SB 189 by eliminating bill language Governor Parson took as controversial which prompted last session's veto. This anti-crime bill included Blair's Law and Chairman Lane Roberts has assured me of his commitment to make sure Blair's Law remains in the bill this session.**

**The Special Committee on Urban**

**Issues that I chair will hopefully be meeting soon when the House Speaker refers legislation pertaining to the Missouri CROWN Act that has been heard in this committee before. This year, Representatives Raychel Proudie and LaKeysha Bosley out of St. Louis City have sponsored this legislation to protect certain cultural hairstyles for people of color.**



**Last week on day one of legislative session with my seatmate Representative Michael Johnson listening to the House Speaker deliver his address to House members.**

# WEEKLY CAPITOL UPDATE

Monday, Jan. 8, 2024

## LEGISLATIVE SESSION GETS UNDERWAY

The 2024 legislative session began Jan. 3 with Republican leaders trying to strike an optimistic tone but hardline conservatives in the Senate making it clear they intend to continue the practices that led to historically low numbers of bills winning final passage in each of the last three years.

**Although Republicans hold supermajorities in both chambers, GOP infighting in the Senate has sharply limited their ability to enact legislation.**

The Senate hardliners first organized in 2021 as the Conservative Caucus but claimed heading into the 2023 session they were disbanding to instead work within the larger Senate Republican Caucus. In practice, however, not much changed, and the group continued to block legislation supported by more mainstream Republicans.

**This year, they're operating under the Freedom Caucus banner and began the first day of session by holding the Senate floor for more than an hour to air grievances against GOP leaders. The hardliners started to resume their criticisms on the session's second day but were cut off when the Senate majority leader moved to adjourn the Senate until next week.**

For their part, several Democratic lawmakers noted that the limited number of bills to win passage last year resulted in some bills not passing that the party had long advocated for that had earned broad bipartisan support.

**They look to continue to push legislation this year to**

**provide targeted tax relief for working families, restore reproductive rights, improve public school teacher salaries and reduce deaths, injuries and property damage by strengthening the penalties for celebratory and indiscriminate gunfire within or into city limits.**

**With an initiative petition being circulated to put a proposed amendment to the state constitution protecting abortion rights on the November ballot, some House Republicans said they will make a last-ditch effort to require supermajority voter approval to ratify constitutional amendments. However, any changes proposed by lawmakers also would need to be approved by voters to take effect, and voters in other states have proven resistant to limiting their own power.**

Even if a higher voter approval threshold makes it on the August ballot and wins voter approval, the courts likely will decide whether the changes apply to measures on the November ballot since doing so would amount to changing the rules in the middle of the game. To qualify for the November ballot, petitions signed by the requisite number of registered voters must be submitted to the state in early May “ months before any changes to the voter approval threshold would take effect.

Republicans outnumber Democrats 24-10 in the Senate and 111-51 in the House of Representatives which has one vacant seat last held by a Democrat.

**The last day of the legislative session is May 17. The constitutional deadline for granting final passage to the state budget for the 2025 fiscal year which begins July 1 is one week earlier on May 10.**

## TARGETED

Gov. Mike Parson on Jan. 2 issued an executive order purporting to prohibit people and businesses from countries designated as foreign adversaries from purchasing agricultural land located within 10 miles of a military facility.

However, the governor's action appears to some critics to be an unconstitutional attempt to enact legislation via executive order.

**Although the executive order doesn't specify the list of countries deemed to be foreign adversaries, an accompanying news release said those countries include China, Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Russia and Venezuela.**

**The issue of foreign ownership of Missouri farmland has been controversial for more than a decade.**

Missouri law prohibited any foreign ownership - regardless of whether an adversarial country was involved - until 2013 when the Republican-controlled General Assembly overrode a veto by then-Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, to repeal the ban. Smithfield Foods which owns several large animal production facilities in Missouri pushed for the change and shortly thereafter was sold to a Chinese company.

Parson and Lt. Gov. Mike Kehoe who joined the governor at a press conference announcing the executive order both voted for the bill and veto override while serving in the Missouri Senate.

Many Democrats opposed repealing the foreign ownership limits and in the years since have sought to restore restrictions. House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, D-Springfield, is one of several lawmakers who

have filed legislation this year to do so.

**These bills would limit foreign ownership of agricultural land more tightly than Parson's limited executive order. Restoring restrictions in state law also would more definitively settle the issue in the event a court strikes down the executive order as an unconstitutional usurpation of legislative power.**

**Parson said he supports legislative action on the matter and that his executive order is intended as a stopgap until that happens.**

## **PARSON PICKS HIGHWAY COMMISSIONERS**

Gov. Mike Parson on Jan. 2 appointed former St. Louis Mayor Francis Slay and former State Senator Dan Hegeman of St. Joseph to the Missouri State Highways and Transportation Commission, the independent governing authority for the state Department of Transportation.

**Slay, a Democrat, served an unprecedented four terms as St. Louis mayor, from 2001 to 2017. He currently is executive director of the St. Louis Regional Crime Commission. Hegeman, a Republican, served in the Missouri House of Representatives from 1991-2002 and in the Missouri Senate from 2015-2022. Before leaving the legislature due to term limits, he was chairman of the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee.**

Because Parson appointed both men one day before the legislature convened for the year, they are considered interim appointments and began serving immediately. As interim appointees, however, the Senate must confirm

their selections within 30 days for them to retain their new posts.

Although Commission terms typically run for six years, Parson appointed both men to fill unexpired terms. If they win Senate confirmation, Slay's term will end March 1, 2027, and Hegeman's will end on March 1, 2029.



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7	\$72,060
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## South KC Food Pantries

South Kansas City is fortunate to have several food pantries to help less-fortunate residents have enough healthy food to eat. These include:

**Community Assistance Council**, 10901 Blue Ridge Blvd. on the north end of the Ruskin High School campus, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Persons should call 816-763-3277, ext. 100, or email [info@cackc.org](mailto:info@cackc.org) for appointments or questions.

**Red Bridge Area Food Pantry**, 100 W. Red Bridge Rd. in the First Baptist Church of Kansas City, from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday each month. Persons must call 816-908-7800 for appointments by the prior Wednesday.

Harvesters (the community food network) brings the semi-truck that serves as its mobile food pantry to seven sites in south Kansas City monthly to distribute fresh produce and other healthy food to families in need. The sites are:

**Center School District**, 8701 Holmes Rd., from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. as long as food is left on the first Saturday of the month. Persons should drive through the bus parking lot to the district warehouse. The event is sponsored by Three Trails Community church in partnership with the Center School District.

**Center District Warehouse**, 8701 Holmes Rd., from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. the second Friday of each month. Persons should go to the entrance to the Center Administrative Office and drive through the bus parking lot to the warehouse where volunteers will load the food. Persons should take the Troost Ave exit. The event is sponsored by the Center Education Foundation in partnership with the Center School District.

**Evangel Church**, 1414 E. 103<sup>rd</sup> St., from 7 to 8:30 a.m. the second

Saturday of the month. Persons may remain in their vehicles, and food will be brought to them.

**United Believers Community Church**, 5600 E. 112th Terr., with vehicles lining up at 8:30 a.m. and contactless food distribution running from 9 to 11 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month.

**Ruskin High School**, 7000 E. 111<sup>th</sup> St., from 4 to 5:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month. Vehicles should line up on Ruskin Way on the east side of the school, and staff and students will load the food when vehicles reach the school.

**Colonial Presbyterian Church**, 9500 Wornall Rd., with registration beginning at 8 a.m. and food distribution running from about 8:30 to 10 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month. Families are asked to bring two cardboard boxes for volunteers to put the food in.

**Red Bridge United Methodist Church**, 636 E. 117<sup>th</sup> St., from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the fourth Friday of the month in the church parking lot.

**Serve and Lift Center - South KC**, 8001 Longview Rd., from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Walk-in, call for an appointment or order online at <https://catholiccharities-kcsj.org/pantry/>



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**Please don't hesitate to contact me  
with any feedback, questions or ideas!**