
Welcome January 2021



It is an honor and privilege to serve the 26th District in the Missouri House of Representatives. I've enjoyed getting to know so many people in our community, and I hope this e-mail newsletter allows me to hear from more of my constituents. Please forward this e-mail to your friends and family in the 26th District who want to know how what happens in the legislature affects all our lives.

2021 Legislation filed to date.

You may also visit www.house.mo.gov to view all legislation filed by Rep. Bland Manlove

[HB 280](#) - (0333H.01I)

Prohibits law enforcement officers from using chokeholds, carotid restraints,

and vascular immobility

[HB 281](#) - (0698H.02I)

Modifies age requirements relating to the certification of juveniles for trial as adults

[HB 282](#) - (0733H.01I)

Prohibits certain discriminatory practices on the basis of hair texture and protective hairstyles

[HB 283](#) - (0724H.01I)

Expands the health professional student loan repayment program to also include mental health professionals

[HB 284](#) - (0813H.02I)

Requires school districts to offer an American civics course beginning with grade 6

[HB 285](#) - (0878H.01I)

Requires the Secretary of State to provide all printed materials in Spanish, upon request

[HB 286](#) - (0343H.01I)

Allows a civil action for summoning a police officer

[HB 287](#) - (0331H.01I)

Requires the appointment of a special prosecutor for investigations of officer-involved deaths or shootings

[HB 797](#) - (1721H.01I)

Prohibits the sale or distribution of novelty lighters

[HB 798](#) - (1726H.01I)

Prohibits text messaging while driving for all drivers

[HB 799](#) - (1710H.01I)

Modifies regulations relating to the carrying-out of wine and wine-based products from certain places

[HB 800](#) - (1709H.01I)

Establishes the National Popular Vote Act

[HB 801](#) - (1711H.01I)

Creates provisions for automatic voter registration

COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Food/Household/Utility Resources:



Need food and hygiene items, emergency rent or utilities assistance, diapers or pull-ups, help with medicines and medical devices?
CAC may be able to help. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Harvesters Community Food Network

Click [HERE](#) to find service in your area

[Community Action Agency of Greater Kansas City](#)

[Spire - Natural Gas Assistance](#)

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

[Full Employment Council - Kansas City](#)

[KCTV5 - Job Connection](#)

[Ford - Claycomo](#)

[Truman Medical Center](#)

[Kansas City Research Hospital](#)

Access to resources for COVID 19 assistance can be found by clicking below.

[COVID Resources](#)

Please click [HERE](#) for information on testing locations thru mid-January

Pre-Registration is strongly encouraged.

In addition, those who are *symptomatic* are encouraged to call 404-CARE to schedule a test at one of our two hospital locations.

Updated vaccine information can be found at:
<https://www.trumed.org/covid-19/covid-19-vaccine/>

CAPITOL UPDATE

This Capitol Update will recap December 2020. If you have any questions or would like further information please contact us at 573.751.2124 or at ashley.blandmanlove@house.mo.gov

SENATE PASSES BUDGET BILL, LAWSUIT IMMUNITY DROPPED

After shelving a controversial proposal to provide businesses, schools, churches and medical providers with blanket legal immunity from lawsuits relating to COVID-19, the Missouri Senate on Dec. 2 voted 23-1 to grant final passage to a \$1.28 billion supplemental budget bill that reallocates federal coronavirus relief funds the state has already received but that must be spent by the end of December.

Although some procedural sessions are scheduled, no further legislation is expected to be considered before lawmakers formally adjourn from the lame-duck special session on Dec. 10. This will mark the second time this year that the Republican-controlled General Assembly has ended a special session without passing key legislation Gov. Mike Parson had requested.

This year's first special session ended Sept. 16 with lawmakers passing just two of the seven crime-related bills Parson, a Republican, had requested. The second special session, which began Nov. 5, originally was for the sole purpose of passing the supplemental budget bill. However, Parson expanded the session a week later to include legal immunity from COVID-19 lawsuits. Under the Missouri Constitution, the governor controls what topics lawmakers may consider in special session.

Despite vocal support from the business lobby, which has pushed for additional legal protections against lawsuits since the pandemic began last spring, enthusiasm for the bill never caught hold, particularly after a COVID-19 outbreak among Senate Republicans forced a two-week suspension of legislative activities in the chamber.

Although a committee hearing was held on the lawsuit immunity Dec. 2, the Senate already announced it had no plans to consider the bill at its Dec. 3 session. While the hearing was underway, Parson sent word requesting the proposal be withdrawn. However, the issue is expected to remain a priority for the governor when the 2021 regular legislative session gets underway Jan. 6.

This was the first lame-duck session – one held after a general election but before new lawmakers take office – since 1970, when Gov. Warren Hearnes, a Democrat, brought the legislature back to pass an income tax increase.

JUDGE RESTORES LAW PREVIOUSLY RULED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

In an unusual move, a Cole County Circuit judge on Dec. 1 reinstated statutes imposing special limits on fine collection and municipal operations in St. Louis County that both he and the Missouri Supreme Court had previously ruled unconstitutional.

Following the Ferguson protests in 2014, the Missouri General Assembly the next year enacted Senate Bill 5, which contained sweeping reforms aimed at reducing abusive municipal court and policing practices focused on generating revenue for city governments instead of public safety and that often ignored the constitutional rights of residents. Although most of the reforms apply statewide, two key provisions affect only municipalities in St. Louis County.

One of those caps the amount of revenue municipal governments in the county can collect from fines and fees at 12.5 percent of a municipality's operating budget, significantly lower than the 20-percent cap SB 5 sets for cities elsewhere in the state. The other provision that applies only to St. Louis County municipalities imposes a variety of minimal standards for municipal operations and requires city police departments to be accredited. Cities that fail to comply face possible disincorporation.

A group of St. Louis County cities led by Normandy challenged those two provisions for violating the state constitution's prohibition against "special laws" that apply only to certain jurisdictions without good cause. Cole County Judge Jon Beetem, a Republican, agreed with the cities and blocked enforcement of both provisions in 2016. The state Supreme Court upheld Beetem's ruling the following year.

However, ruling in another case in December 2019, the high court completely overhauled its standard for reviewing special laws and invalidated much of its precedent on the subject, including its prior ruling involving SB 5. That prompted Attorney General Eric Schmitt, a Republican, to file a motion with Beetem in January asking him to lift his 2016 injunction barring enforcement of St. Louis County-specific provisions. Schmitt sponsored SB 5 while serving in the state Senate.

In his latest ruling, Beetem agreed that in light of the Supreme Court's new standards on what constitutes a special law, the statutory provisions imposing minimal standards for St. Louis county municipalities and capping fine and fee revenue at 12.5 percent are constitutional and should be reinstated since the legislature had a rational basis for treating the county differently than others.

"(T)hose calling for police and municipal-court reform in St. Louis County concluded that St. Louis County's municipal courts had a deeply entrenched 'culture' of revenue-driven enforcement that had developed over decades of minimal oversight, and that this culture was unique to St. Louis County," Beetem wrote. "The legislature could rationally have concluded that stricter standards were appropriate for St. Louis County because the revenue-driven culture that causes police and municipal-court abuses was more deeply entrenched in St. Louis County than anywhere else in the State."

The cities that originally brought the case can still appeal to the state Supreme Court. The case is *City of Normandy, et al., v. Parson*.

VETERANS HOMES WERE UNPREPARED FOR COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Officials at the Missouri Veterans Commission leaders failed to adequately prepare for and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks at the state's seven veterans' homes that resulted in the deaths of more than 100 resident veterans, according to a report issued Dec. 2 by a law firm

hired by the state in October to investigate the matter.

Just one Missouri veterans' home resident had died of COVID-19 prior to September. The death toll had since risen to 109 as of Nov. 18.

“Headquarters should have known by the beginning of summer 2020 – well before the fall outbreak – that COVID-19 spreads covertly through asymptomatic carriers and is difficult to control in a residential setting like a nursing home,” according to the report by investigators with the St. Louis law firm of Armstrong-Teasdale. “But despite several months to prepare for a predicted fall surge in COVID-19 cases, MVC Headquarters did not develop any comprehensive outbreak plan. As a result, they did not have an opportunity to vet the plan with outside agencies or other long-term care facilities, or test the plan to identify areas of needed improvement. The lack of a comprehensive outbreak plan led to confusion and inefficiencies, and it almost certainly contributed to the inability to contain the spread of COVID-19 once it was introduced into the Homes.”

The report includes a long list of corrective recommendations, including improved coordination between leadership MVC headquarters and veterans' home staff to develop comprehensive plans for preventing and containing COVID-19 outbreaks.

LAWS USED TO BLOCK ABORTION VOTE UNCONSTITUTIONAL

A Cole County judge on Dec. 4 ruled unconstitutional two state statutes Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft invoked last year to block Missouri voters from having a chance to decide whether legislation criminalizing most abortions after just eight weeks of pregnancy should become law.

After the Republican-controlled Missouri General Assembly enacted House Bill 126, which included other abortion restrictions, on the last day of the 2019 legislative session, opponents of the bill quickly filed a referendum petition, which forces a statewide vote on a bill passed by lawmakers and signed by the governor and prevents it from taking effect unless approved by voters.

Ashcroft, a Republican, initially declared the petition unconstitutional because a portion of HB 126 was subject to an emergency clause causing it to take effect immediately upon being

signed by the governor and the state constitution prohibits referenda on bills that already have become law. Ruling in a lawsuit brought by petition organizers, the Missouri Court of Appeals said on July 8, 2019, that the secretary of state has no authority to declare things unconstitutional and ordered him to certify the petition.

However, Ashcroft didn't immediately do so, noting that state law granted him up to 51 days to complete the job. He finally cleared the petition for circulation on Aug. 14, 2019, just two weeks before the deadline for turning in the more than 100,000 signatures from registered voters required to force HB 126 onto the November 2020 ballot, a likely impossible task by that point.

Ruling in follow-up lawsuit to prevent Ashcroft from blocking future referenda attempts, Cole County Judge Jon Beetem, a Republican, noted that for a bill passed on the final day of a legislative session, the deadline for submitting a referendum petition is just 90 days, but that the challenged statutes allow state officials to take away up to 51 of those days. As a result, Beetem said those statutes unconstitutionally impede the right of citizens to force statewide votes on legislative acts and should no longer be.

"No pre-circulation presentment to the government is contemplated by the constitution," Beetem wrote. "Bestowing on state officials the authority to derail the referendum petition process by delaying the certification of an official ballot title is contrary to the plain language of (the constitution) and the primary objectives of the reservation of the referendum power."

Although Ashcroft successfully stymied the HB 126 referendum, most of the bill's key provisions have been blocked by a federal judge, who ruled they violate U.S. Supreme Court landmark decision in *Roe v. Wade* protecting abortion rights.

MISSOURI REPUBLICANS JOIN ELECTION STEALING EFFORTS

The Missouri House of Representatives extended a special legislative session that was expected to end on Dec. 10, so that majority Republicans can pass a non-binding resolution calling on Congress to reject the presidential election results of six states won by former Vice President Joe Biden, a Democrat, in a ludicrous effort to keep President Donald Trump in power. Biden handily defeated Trump, a Republican, in both the Electoral College and national popular vote.

Sixty-seven House Republicans, including House Majority Leader Rob Vescovo, signed a

letter to departing House Speaker Elijah Haahr, R-Springfield, asking him to extend the special session, which Republican Gov. Mike Parson called last month for lawmakers to enact an emergency spending bill. Vescovo, of Arnold, is slated to become speaker when the regular legislative session begins Jan. 6.

House Resolution 2 cites disproven or unsubstantiated claims of fraud in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada – states won by Biden. A House committee is expected to hear the resolution on Dec. 14, with the full 163-member chamber to convene amid the worsening COVID-19 pandemic to debate the measure shortly thereafter.

The Senate, which also is Republican-controlled, permanently adjourned from the special session on Dec. 10 and will not participate in the House Republican scheme. As a purely symbolic resolution with no force of law, no Senate action on HR 2 is required.

HR 2 was filed one day after Missouri Attorney General Eric Schmitt, a Republican, joined a lawsuit brought by Texas asking the U.S. Supreme Court to directly intervene and throw out the elections results in four Biden states – Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan and Georgia. Legal experts cited by various news outlets have said the lawsuit has no chance of success.

“By seeking to invalidate the lawful votes of other states in a ludicrous attempt to steal the presidential election for Donald Trump, the attorney general and House Republicans have abandoned all pretense of support for and belief in democracy,” House Minority Leader Crystal Quade, D-Springfield, said in a statement. “Their actions cannot be dismissed as mere partisan scheming and are dangerous to the integrity of our entire system of government. This is insanity on a fast track to dystopian nightmare.”

COMMISSION PICKS FINALISTS FOR APPELLATE VACANCY

The Missouri Appellate Judicial Commission nominated a trio of presiding circuit judges as finalists for vacancy on the Missouri Court of Appeals Southern District that will open when Judge Daniel Scott retires at the end of the year. Scott, an appointee of Republican Gov. Matt Bunt, has served on the Springfield-based court for more than 14 years.

The finalists are Scott County Circuit Judge David Dolan, a Democrat with 27 years’ experience on the bench; Lawrence County Circuit Judge Jack Goodman, a Republican who served 10 years in the House and Senate before being elected judge in 2012; and Christian

County Circuit Judge Laura Johnson, a Republican who was first elected judge in 2014.

Under the Missouri Nonpartisan Court Plan, the commission submits the names of three finalists for appellate vacancies to the governor, who must pick one within 60 days or forfeit the decision to the commission.

NET GENERAL REVENUE COLLECTIONS UP IN NOVEMBER

Net state general revenue collections for November 2020 increased 14.5 percent compared to November 2019, going from \$708.5 million last year to \$811.1 million this year. The boost was driven by strong growth in individual and corporate income tax collections compared to last November.

Year-to-date net general revenue collections through the first five months of the 2021 fiscal year were up 23.3 percent compared to the same period in FY 2020, going from \$3.68 billion last year to \$4.53 billion this year. However, the year-to-date revenue figures are inflated by the fact that this year's income tax filing deadline was delayed from April to July due to the COVID-19 pandemic, thus pushing revenue that normally would have been collected in FY 2020 into the early months of FY 2021.

COMMITTEE PASSES RESOLUTION ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

On a straight party-line vote, the House Special Committee on Government Oversight on Dec. 14 voted 6-3 in favor of a non-binding resolution calling on Congress to reject the presidential election results of six states won by former Vice President Joe Biden, a Democrat, as part of a far-fetched attempt by Republicans secure another term for President Donald Trump, who lost both the national popular vote and electoral vote by wide margins.

However, the full Missouri House of Representatives adjourned from its special legislative session on Dec. 16 without taking up the politically motivated measure. The House had been expected to end the session Dec. 10 but extended it at the behest of 67 Republican lawmakers who signed on to resolution. The measure died when the chairman of a procedural committee that also had to approve it prior to House debate said his panel would not meet.

The government oversight committee vote took place on the same day the Electoral College met in state capitols across the country to formally election Biden as president. Biden won

306 electoral votes, while Trump garnered 232, including Missouri's 10 electoral votes. Congress will take the largely ministerial action of certifying the Electoral College results on Jan. 6.

House Resolution 2 urged Congress to reject in the electoral votes from Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Michigan, Georgia, Arizona and Nevada, swing states won by Biden. During a contentious three-hour hearing, HR 2 supporters offered no evidence of fraud that would justify overturning millions of votes in those states. Trump attorney Rudy Giuliani, who appeared via videoconference, was the primary witness but only offered debunked and unsubstantiated claims that already had been rejected by dozens of state and federal courts across the country.

STATE REVENUE EXPECTED TO DROP \$418.8 MILLION IN FY 2022

State budget officials expect that net state general revenue collections for the upcoming fiscal year will decline by 4.1 percent compared to the anticipated collections for the current fiscal year, dropping by a hefty \$418.8 million.

The governor's administration and budget leaders in the Senate and House of Representatives agree to the so-called consensus revenue estimate most years just before the annual state budget process gets underway to ensure all parties are working from the same assumptions regarding how much money the state will have to spend in the coming fiscal year.

The budget process for the 2022 fiscal year begins in January when Gov. Mike Parson presents his proposed spending plan to lawmakers, who have through May 7 to pass a final budget. The FY 2022 fiscal year begins July 1.

STATE APPROVES POLICE ACADEMY FOR LINCOLN UNIVERSITY

State officials on Dec. 15 finalized a license for Lincoln University to operate a law enforcement training academy on its campus. Lincoln's academy, which is expected to enroll its first recruit class in January, will be the first in the nation operated by a historically Black college or university, according to a news release.

The Missouri Peace Officer Standards and Training Commission, which oversees the training and licensing of law enforcement officers in the state, voted to recommend the Lincoln

academy for licensure on Nov. 30, and the Missouri Department of Public Safety approved it two weeks later.

In addition, the POST Commission has voted to require future recruits at all Missouri police academies to undergo two hours of training on the history of policing in minority communities, including role of police in enforcing racist Jim Crow laws and slavery.

GOVERNOR SIGNS \$1.28 BILLION SUPPLEMENTARY BUDGET BILL

Gov. Mike Parson on Dec. 11 signed into law a \$1.28 billion supplemental budget bill for the 2021 fiscal year that reallocates federal coronavirus relief funds the state has already received but that must be spent by the end of December. Parson, a Republican, called lawmakers into a special legislative session in November to pass the bill.

The measure, House Bill 14, enjoyed bipartisan support in both legislative chambers. The House of Representatives approved it by a vote of 133-4 on Nov. 10. The Senate voted 23-1 to grant it final passage on Dec. 2.

JUDGE UPHOLDS MEDICAL MARIJUANA LICENSE LIMITS

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services' decision to restrict the number licenses to cultivate, manufacture and sell medical marijuana is consistent with constitutional standards and doesn't violate the 'right to farm' amendment Missouri voters ratified in 2014, a Cole County Judge ruled on Dec. 21.

Under a 2018 constitutional amendment legalizing marijuana for medical use, the health department is charged with regulating all aspects of the new industry. A Sarcoxie family who had been denied a cultivation license sued the department, claiming its decision to severely limit the number of licenses was arbitrary and in conflict with the right to farm amendment.

However, Judge Patricia Joyce noted in her ruling that the medical marijuana amendment specifically grants the department the discretion to determine the appropriate number of licenses, subject to certain minimums. She also pointed out that the Missouri Supreme Court has already determined the right to farm does not extend to the cultivation of marijuana, which generally remains an illegal controlled substance and even in the medical context is subject to strict regulation.

“To argue that the facility license limits consistent with the plain language of Article XIV, Section 1 violate another article of the constitution attempts to place these constitutional provisions in conflict where there is none,” Joyce wrote. “The right to farm does not apply to the cultivation of marijuana.”

According to the facts set forth in Joyce’s ruling, there were 582 applicants for just 60 cultivation licenses, 430 applicants for the 86 licenses to produce marijuana infused products and 1,218 applicants for the 192 dispensary licenses. Joyce said the department had a legitimate interest in limiting the licenses in order to keep excess medical marijuana from spilling over into the illegal market for recreational use.

The plaintiffs in the case, *Sarcoxie Cultivation Center, et al., v. Randall Williams, et al.*, are expected to appeal to the Missouri Supreme Court.

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDIT PROGRAM REVIVED

Three years after former Gov. Eric Greitens blocked the issuance of state tax credits for low income housing, the commission responsible for overseeing the program approved millions in tax credits for dozens of projects across the state. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Missouri Housing Development Commission on Dec. 17 approved \$300 million in state and federal tax credits over the next 10 years.

Critics have long contended Missouri’s Low Income Housing Tax Credit program does more to enrich developers than provide housing for the poor. Going back many years, state auditors of both parties have issued reports concluding that LIHTC costs taxpayers far more than the program delivered in housing.

After taking control of MHDC in 2017, Greitens, a Republican, urged it to stop issuing state housing tax credits, although the federal credits that pass through the commission continued. With Greitens’ resignation the following year, the LIHTC money stream was expected to resume flowing, especially since his replacement, Gov. Mike Parson had strong ties to developers and had voted against Greitens plan to halt the credits while a member of MHDC as lieutenant governor.

However, Parson, also a Republican, surprised many by not immediately reviving the program and instead urging lawmakers to reform it to make it more efficient and address the

concerns of critics. Reform efforts failed to win support during the 2019 legislative session, and the issue wasn't a priority during the pandemic-shortened 2020 session. With state credits again being issued, LIHTC supporters likely will no longer have an incentive to agree to reforms.

STATE APPROVES FIRST CHARTER SCHOOL IN STL COUNTY

The Missouri State Board of Education on Dec. 17 granted approval for a charter school to open for the 2021-2020 within the boundaries of the Normandy School Collaborative in north St. Louis County. The Leadership School will be first charter school in Missouri located outside of Kansas City and St. Louis city.

Although the vote was 6-1 in favor, with one member voting present, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported the board's support was reluctant and primarily due to the fact that state law gives members no discretion to deny a charter school application so long as it meets the basic legal requirements. Some board members expressed concern about authorizing a charter school in Normandy when many local residents and elected officials are opposed.

Charter schools are public schools that operate independently of their local school districts and are exempt from many state education regulations. They draw their funding by taking a share of the state money that otherwise would go to their local district.

JUDGE FINDS VICTIMS' 'BILL OF RIGHTS' UNCONSTITUTIONAL

A Cole County Judge on Dec. 17 ruled unconstitutional portions of a new law establishing a "bill of rights" for sexual assault survivors and continued to block the state from enforcing them. The legislature passed the provisions in question in the spring as part of Senate Bill 569. They had been scheduled to take effect on Aug. 28 but were placed on hold while the litigation was pending.

State Public Defender Mary Fox sued claiming the provisions establishing certain rights for victims unconstitutionally restrict the ability of defense attorneys to represent defendants in sexual assault cases and infringe on the constitutional right to a fair trial. While striking down those provisions, Judge Patricia Joyce rejected Fox's claim that SB 569 should be invalidated in its entirety for violating constitutional prohibitions on bills from being changed from their original purpose or from containing multiple subjects.

The bill also modifies procedures for tracking evidence collection kits and includes other changes to laws relating to sex crimes. The state could appeal Joyce's decision to the Missouri Supreme Court. The case is *Mary Fox, et al., v. State of Missouri, et al.*

NEW LEGISLATIVE SESSION GETS UNDERWAY JAN. 6

The 101st Missouri General Assembly convenes on Jan. 6 with the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to cast its shadow over legislative proceedings and influence many major issues, including the state budget, implementation of Medicaid expansion and efforts to speed the state's economic recovery.

State budget officials predict net general revenue collections for the upcoming 2022 fiscal year, which begins July 1, will decline 4.1 percent – a sizeable \$418.8 million – compared to anticipated collections for the current fiscal year. That likely will mean a continuation of the deep budget cuts Gov. Mike Parson, a Republican, imposed for both FY 2020 and FY 2021 as the pandemic took its toll on Missouri's economy and state revenue collections.

Majority Republicans might attempt to use the state's troubling financial outlook as a pretext for continuing to block Medicaid expansion, despite voter ratification in August of a constitutional amendment setting the state's eligibility threshold for the health care assistance program at 138 percent of the federal poverty level. Under the federal Affordable Care Act, the federal government will pay for 90 percent of the cost of expansion.

Most independent analyses of Medicaid expansion predict it will actually result in a net savings to Missouri's budget by substantially reducing other costs and boosting economic activity in the health care sector, as has happened in other states. However, Republicans, as they have since the ACA took effect in 2014, contend expansion will prove too costly. If Republicans refuse to fund expansion through the budget in defiance of constitutional eligibility requirements, the issue is certain to end up in court.

The partisan breakdown for the 2021 session remains largely unchanged from the previous year, with Republicans outnumbering Democrats 24-10 in the Senate and 114-48 in the House of Representatives, which has one Democratic vacancy. Although Republicans hold veto-proof majorities in both chambers, with a Republican governor veto overrides aren't expected to be much of an issue.

The 2021 session will also bring the once-a-decade task of redrawing the boundaries of Missouri's eight congressional districts to account for population shifts since the 2010 U.S. Census. With the 2020 Census results still not finalized and reported to the states, the redistricting process likely won't begin until March.

Missouri's current congressional delegation consists of six Republicans and two Democrats. Since the latter two districts are in heavily Democratic areas in and around Kansas City and St. Louis, that partisan split isn't expected to change.

HAWLEY TO SUPPORT EFFORT TO OVERTURN BIDEN WIN

U.S. Sen. Josh Hawley, R-Mo., on Dec. 30 became the first senator to publicly support a futile and politically divisive effort to overturn President-elect Joe Biden's victory when Congress meets Jan. 6 to perform the ceremonial act of certifying the Electoral College results. Biden, a Democrat, handily defeated President Donald Trump, a Republican, winning with 306 electoral votes to 232 for Trump.

An 1887 federal law allows a state's electoral votes to be challenged with the support of at least one representative and one senator when Congress convenes to formalize the election results. Although a handful of fringe Republican representatives had announced plans to challenge Biden's electoral wins in several states based on disproven or unsubstantiated claims of fraud, no senator supported the ploy until Hawley.

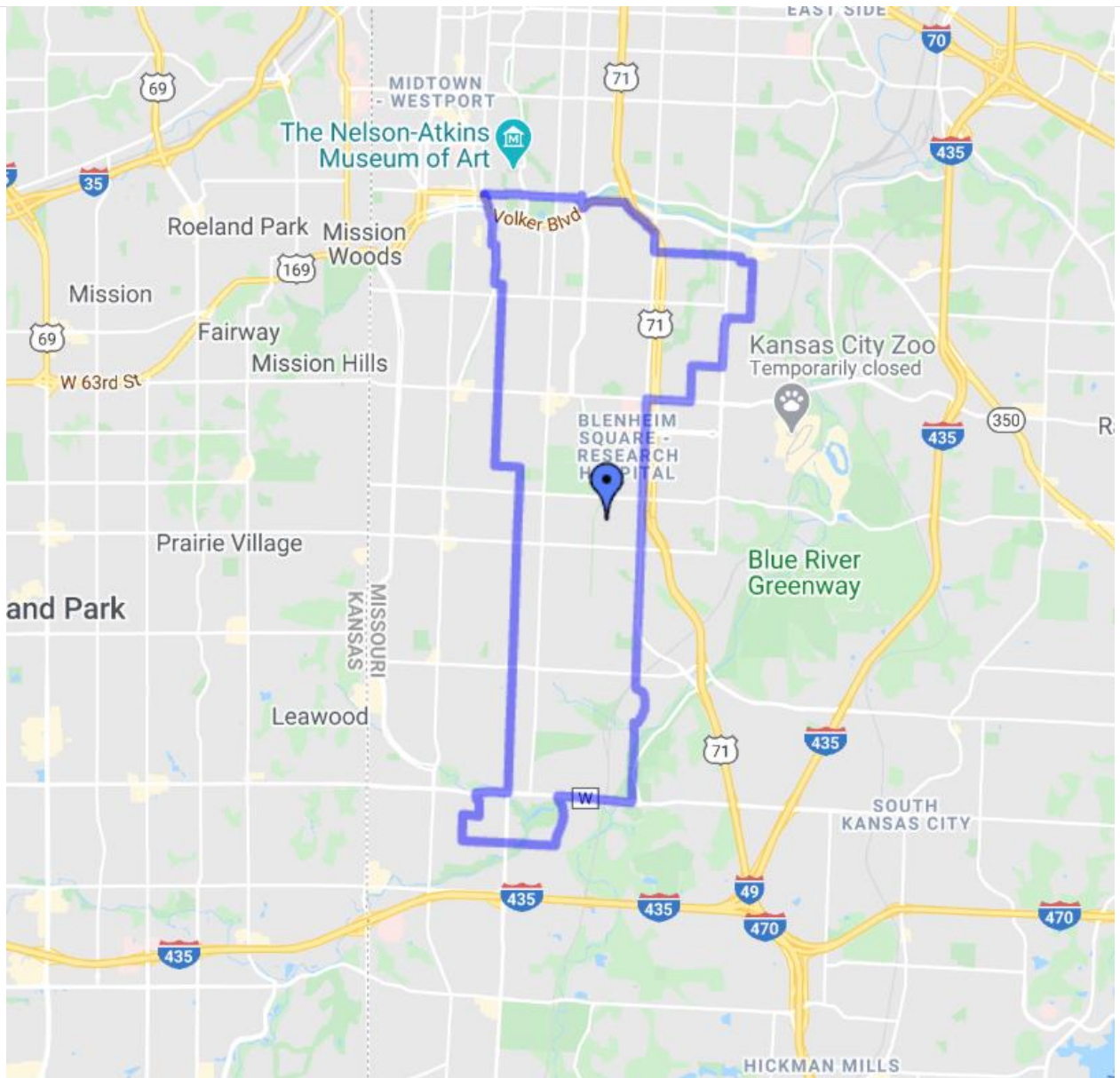
The effort has no chance of success since all an objection does is require the House and Senate to return to their respective chamber to debate the question for up to two hours. With Democrats controlling the House and no evidence of fraud to justify overturning any state's election result, the objection is guaranteed to fail in that chamber.

Hawley's announcement sparked strong criticism from Missouri editorial boards, with The Kansas City Star calling it "dangerous nonsense and desperately wrong in every way." The conservative Joplin Globe said Hawley had no case and noted the recent presidential election "has been investigated, litigated and dissected without turning up any evidence of widespread or systemic fraud." Both papers said the move appears to be calculated to bolster Hawley's aspirations for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination.



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