



Dear Neighbor,

Last week the Missouri House through an overwhelming bipartisan voice vote added Blair's Law to an omnibus crime bill (House Committee Substitute for House Bill 301) that passed the House and now awaits action in the Senate.

Blair's Law will make discharging a firearm within or into any city limits with criminal negligence a serious state offense instead of just a city ordinance violation. It is designed to reduce the continued barrage of celebratory and indiscriminate gunfire that has plagued Kansas City and many other Missouri municipalities in recent years, particularly on certain holidays or other special events such as Sunday's Super Bowl victory by the Chiefs.

It is named after 11-year-old Blair Shanahan Lane who was killed here by such gunfire during the July 4 holiday in 2011. There have been several other victims who have been killed or injured by celebratory and indiscriminate gunfire in our metropolitan area and numerous instances of property damage from such dangerous and irresponsible gunfire.

This is the fourth year in a row that I have sponsored legislation to enact Blair's Law. Its provisions passed the House in both 2021 and 2022, but those legislative sessions adjourned before the full Senate ever voted on it. This year's version of the bill is House Bill 109.

I greatly appreciate my friend and colleague, Rep. Michael Johnson of Kansas City, a co-sponsor of HB 109, adding Blair's Law by amendment to HCSHB 301 - which is the first major crime bill to be considered by the House this session - in an effort to get Blair's Law all the way through the legislative process before this year's session adjourns.

Since there are strict limits under new House rules on how many bills committees can recommend for passage, it is often necessary to combine bills of similar subject matter for them to have a reasonable chance of passage.

HCSHB 301 as amended is a 21-page bill that covers nine subtopics, some of which have broad support such as Blair's Law and some of which are controversial.

Some of its provisions that I strongly support are:

-Requiring the Department of Corrections to assist inmates with applying for Medicaid and obtaining the documents they will need to find employment upon their release such as birth certificates, Social Security cards and state IDs;

-Establishing factors that must be considered when setting bail for defendants such as whether they pose a danger to the public, are a flight risk or have committed certain serious offenses within the last five years;

-Broadening the felonies that require minimum prison terms for offenders with prior felony convictions, but allowing judges to waive minimum terms if they find such terms would result in a substantial injustice or are not necessary to protect the public;

-Creating the offense of tampering with a judicial officer for disseminating the personally identifiable information of a judicial officer or the officer's family, with enhanced penalties when such actions result in death or bodily injury; and

-Establishing the “Peace Officer Basic Training Tuition Reimbursement Program” to allow Missouri residents who obtain full-time employment with a Missouri law enforcement agency to apply for tuition reimbursement

for attending a law enforcement academy for the required training to become a law enforcement officer in Missouri.

Its controversial provisions, include:

-Restricting the lifetime ban on possessing a firearm for all convicted felons to only those convicted of violent felonies. Persons convicted of non-violent felonies, would be allowed to possess a firearm, but only after they successfully complete any probation or parole for such a felony.

-Authorizing the governor to appoint a special prosecutor for a renewable period of up to five years who would have exclusive jurisdiction to prosecute 1st or 2nd degree murder, 1st or 2nd degree assault, 1st or 2nd degree robbery, vehicle hijacking or any other charges stemming from the same event in any jurisdiction where the governor determines a threat to public safety and health exists after reviewing crime statistics **or** that has had over 35 homicide cases per 100,000 people in the preceding 12 months.

The special prosecutor would be authorized to hire up to 15 assistant prosecuting attorneys, plus up to 15 additional staff members. **Funding for the special prosecutor's office would come from the state's general revenue fund.**

Currently, only the City of St. Louis appears likely to have a special prosecutor appointed if HCSHB 301 passes, but the current version of the bill that passed the House does give the governor broad discretion to appoint one whenever he determines that a threat to public safety and health exists after reviewing federal, state or local crime statistics.

If anyone would like to contact me about legislation they would like me to support or oppose, please email me at Mark.Sharp@house.mo.gov.

Here are my current House committee appointments:

Special Committee on Urban Issues, Chair

Subcommittee on Appropriations - General

Administration

Consent and House Procedure

Crime Prevention and Public Safety

Special Committee on Election Contests

I also serve on the Joint Committee on

Legislative Research

Email is probably the best way to reach my office. If you are unable to quickly reach me, you can contact my legislative aide Racheal Cunningham at Racheal.Cunningham@house.mo.gov.

Please scroll down to read about other state government matters and important upcoming local

events.

Feel free to forward this newsletter to your friends and family who might want to know the latest news about what is happening in state government and about important local events. Be safe and God bless.

Yours in Service,
Mark A. Sharp



Last Wednesday I explained Blair's Law which was added as an amendment to HCSHB 301, an omnibus crime bill. My friend and colleague Representative Michael Johnson offered Blair's Law as an amendment to HCSHB 301 on my behalf. Numerous members of both parties spoke in favor of Blair's Law, and the amendment was adopted overwhelmingly by voice vote. HCSHB 301 passed on a roll call vote of 109 yes, 35 no, and 1 present.

WEEKLY CAPITOL UPDATE

Tuesday, February 14th, 2023

HOUSE ADVANCES SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

The House of Representatives voted 148-2 on Feb. 9 to grant first-round approval to a nearly \$627.15 million emergency supplemental appropriations bill for the fiscal year 2023 state budget. The bill includes spending authority to provide state workers with an immediate 8.7% pay raise.

Gov. Mike Parson has asked lawmakers to quickly grant final passage to the bill so the raises can take effect March 1. Parson said the increase is necessary to offset high inflation and help stem a recent exodus

of state workers to higher-paying private sector jobs that has left the state with about 7,000 open positions.

Although Parson's original plan also would have provided raises to lawmakers and statewide elected officials, the House Budget Committee stripped those pay bumps from the measure, House Bill 14. A second vote is required to advance the bill to the Senate.

MEDICAID ENROLLMENT EXPECTED TO DROP

Around 200,000 Missourians are expected to lose Medicaid coverage over the next year as the state resumes eligibility checks that had been on hold since 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic, MO HealthNet Division Director Mark Richardson told a House appropriations committee on Feb. 1, according to a Feb. 2 story by the Missouri Independent.

Medicaid eligibility status changes frequently, with recipients commonly going on and off the rolls due to income fluctuations. But for the last three years, annual eligibility verification has been on hold to ensure Missourians didn't lose coverage during a public health emergency.

The number of Missourians eligible for Medicaid increased significantly in recent years after voters in 2020 ratified a constitutional amendment

implementing an expansion of the program, known in Missouri as MO HealthNet.

Under the federal Affordable Care Act, states can increase their eligibility threshold to 138% of the federal poverty level, with the federal government paying 90% of the cost for providing services to the expanded population.

According to data from the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS), 300,140 adults enrolled in MO HealthNet under the expanded eligibility rules as of Feb. 3. DSS reported a total of 1,446,914 Missourians were enrolled in the program as of December 2022.

STATE SUPREME COURT JUDGES TO RETIRE

Missouri Supreme Court Judges Patricia Breckenridge and George Draper III will step down later this year when they reach the state's mandatory judicial retirement age of 70.

Chief Justice Paul Wilson announced the pending departures during the annual State of the Judiciary address before a joint session of the General Assembly.

“Combined those two judges have served the people of this state for more than 70 years, first as trial judges, then on the Court of Appeals and now on the Supreme

Court,” Wilson said.

“Both of them have dedicated their lives – not just to the work of the courts – but to the principles of access, fairness and equal justice for all; principles that lie at the heart of our justice system. The courts have benefited immeasurably from their work, and we will miss them dearly,” he said.

Breckenridge is the second-longest serving judge currently on the Supreme Court, to which she was appointed by Gov. Matt Blunt in September 2007. She previously served as an associate circuit judge in Vernon County from 1982 to 1990 and on the Court of Appeals Western District from 1990 to 2007.

Draper was appointed to the Supreme Court in October 2011 by Gov. Jay Nixon. He earlier served as an associate circuit judge in St. Louis County from 1994 to 1998, a circuit judge from 1998 to 2000 and on the Court of Appeals Eastern District from 2000 to 2011.

Draper will hit the mandatory retirement age in August, with Breckenridge following in October. Both judges took turns serving as the Supreme Court’s chief justice, a position that rotates among the court’s seven members every two years. Breckenridge held the post from 2015 to 2017, while Draper did so from 2019 to 2021.

Under the state’s Nonpartisan Court Plan, the

Missouri Appellate Judicial Commission will submit three finalists for each vacancy to Gov. Mike Parson, who must choose from those finalists or forfeit the decision to the commission. Once he fills the pending vacancies, Parson will have appointed three members of the seven-member Supreme Court.

ATTEMPTED FRAUD SKEWS REVENUE REPORT

An attempted fraud scheme made it appear net state general revenue collections for January 2023 had jumped a whopping 55.1% compared to January 2022, according to a news release from the Missouri Office of Budget and Planning announcing the state revenue collections for the month.

The release made just a passing reference to the scheme in a footnote noting that the reported January collections were inaccurate because of it.

The St. Louis Post-Dispatch later reported the Missouri Department of Revenue discovered the scheme when it received a flood of fraudulent tax payments in late January. A department spokeswoman told the paper the false payments were intended to trigger refunds from the department's payment system but that no taxpayer money was lost.

Before the fraud skewed the numbers, revenue collections had been expected to plummet in January with the implementation of a major income tax cut the legislature enacted last fall. State budget officials said the reversal of the fraudulent payments will be reflected in the February revenue numbers.

**3
DAYS!**

The Great Backyard Bird Count

Saturday, February 18, 2023 — 9-10:30 AM

Sunday, February 19, 2023 — 3-4:30 PM

Monday, February 20, 2023 — 9-10:30 AM

Trailside Center - 9901 Holmes Rd. - Kansas City MO - 816-942-3581

What is the Great Backyard Bird Count?

It is an annual event since 1998 where birders observe birds anywhere and record the species and the number of birds they see. The results are submitted to Cornell University where they can deduct what is happening to the bird populations in the world.



Northern Cardinals
Male and Female
Cardinalis cardinalis



How can I participate?

Just come on any of the dates and times above to Trailside Center for this **FREE OUTDOOR EVENT**.

- All levels of birding expertise are welcome. All ages welcome.
- Be prepared — group will be hiking for about 1 mile along the paved Indian Creek Trail.
- Dress in layers for warmth; wear comfortable hiking shoes.
- Bring binoculars and birding field guides if you have them.
- Estimated time of the event is 90 minutes.



Volunteers from the
Missouri Master Naturalists
will lead the hike.

Trailside Center Covid/Flu Guidelines:

- ♦ There will a brief introduction of birds to watch for on the outing, so come inside for a review prior to the walk. Restrooms/water on site.
- ♦ Mask optional.

For further information about the Great Backyard Bird Count:
www.birdcount.org

KANSAS CITY

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Program 2023

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301 W. 13th Street,
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- Meet 40+ Admission Reps in person
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Understanding and Accessing **MISSOURI MEDICAID**

More Missourians than ever now qualify for Medicaid expansion, including parents who have not qualified before, and adults without children. Learn to see if you qualify for Medicaid and how to apply.

Am I eligible?

Medicaid eligibility depends primarily on the size of your household and your gross **monthly** household income (before taxes and deductions). If your monthly income is lower than the number of people living in your home, **you may qualify**.



1

\$1,481

2

\$2,003

3

\$2,525

4

\$3,048

5

\$3,570

6

\$4,092

How do I apply?

GOOD NEWS!

Applying is easy, and there are several convenient and accessible ways to do it!

Online:

Visit <https://mydss.mo.gov/healthcare/apply> to apply quickly via the DHSS web portal

By Phone:

Call the Missouri Family Support Division at (855)-373-4636 or (855)-373-9994

By Mail or Email:

Print and fill out an application provided at the web address listed above and mail to:

Family Support Division
615 E 13th St
Kansas City, MO 64106

Or email to:

FSD.Documents@dss.mo.gov

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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 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 10 a.m. until food runs out 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. 103rd 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. 111th St., from 3:30 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. 117th 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!**