



Dear Neighbor,

The Missouri General Assembly is on Spring Break the week of March 13-17 and will resume legislative business on March 20th.

Spring Break generally signifies the midway point of the legislative session, and so far there has been legislation the Missouri House has passed that I'm deeply in favor of, and some not so much.

Legislation that I think will help improve public safety in Missouri includes Blair's Law, a bill I've sponsored the last four years.

Blair's Law would make discharging a firearm with criminal negligence into or within city limits a serious state offense. This legislation is named after 11-year-

old Blair Shanahan Lane who was killed here by celebratory gunfire on the 4th of July holiday in 2011.

Every year that I've sponsored this bill to help deter celebratory and indiscriminate gunfire by stiffening the penalties against it, the bill has gone further and further in the legislative process.

This session, the language of Blair's Law, which I introduced as House Bill 109, was added by amendment to the first omnibus crime bill (House Committee Substitute for House Bill 301) that has passed the House.

This marks the fastest Blair's Law has been voted out of the House which significantly improves its chances of passing both branches of the legislature before this year's legislative session adjourns May 12.

Since its House passage, a Senate Committee Substitute for HCSHB 301 has already been recommended for Senate passage by the Senate Judiciary and Civil and Jurisprudence Committee.

Another piece of legislation the House passed nearly unanimously that should help improve public safety - particularly in KCMO - is House Committee Substitute for House Bills 640 (I sponsored) & 729 (Representative Chris Brown sponsored) that removes the out-of-date and non-competitive salary caps in state law for all

KCMO police ranks.

This legislation is designed to help our Police Department's efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified police officers so we no longer keep losing some of our best officers to nearby jurisdictions with higher salaries.

It authorizes the Board of Police Commissioners to establish competitive salary schedules for all ranks that are not restricted by the outdated salary caps.

This legislation also erases the discriminatory language in state law enacted in 1943 that prohibits hiring anyone as police chief who is over 60 years of age.

This legislative was heard in the Special Committee on Urban Issues that I chair and recommended for House passage without dissent. The committee members and I were very pleased that Kansas City Mayor Quinton Lucas traveled to Jefferson City to testify in support of the legislation.

This legislation was a priority for the City of Kansas City, the Mayor's Office, the Police Department and the Public Safety Coalition.

The House also has passed legislation that I think will hurt Missouri.

One such measure is House Joint Resolution 43, a proposed constitutional amendment, which would require future constitutional amendments proposed by initiative petitions to be approved by 60% of a statewide vote to ratify them, instead of the simple majority now required for approval.

Citizen groups that want to enact new laws through the initiative petition process when the General Assembly has failed to pass similar legislation generally propose such measures as constitutional amendments to prevent the legislature from simply passing a law to repeal them soon after they pass. Provisions in the Missouri constitution can only be repealed or changed by a vote of the people.

In recent years, several progressive measures have been added to the constitution through citizen led initiative petitions such as approving Medicaid expansion, medical and recreational marijuana usage and “Clean Missouri” redistricting and ethics reforms.

The fate of similar progressive ballot measures in the future would be much more doubtful if 60% voter approval is required.

I voted against HJR 43.

Last but not least is House Committee Substitute for House Bill 253 known as the open enrollment bill. This

bill would allow students to leave their home school district and enroll in another public school district that has opted in to the open enrollment program and agreed to accept students who don't live in their districts.

The bad part is school districts don't have to opt-in to lose students, only to take in additional students. The bill allows districts to limit the maximum number of their students who can transfer any year to 3% of their prior school year's enrollment.

This bill will have harmful effects because families who want their children to attend other public schools will be given the green light to do so. All they need to do is find a district that has opted in to the open enrollment program. Their share of per-pupil state funding will follow them to their new districts, penalizing their former districts that are often already struggling financially.

I was able to work with the bill sponsor as I did on last year's similar bill to include language in the bill to allow the provisionally accredited Hickman Mills School District which covers most of my legislative district to block transfers of any of its students for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years when the bill becomes effective if it passes.

This will give the district three more school years after this year to regain full accreditation which

should significantly lessen the number of families that want to transfer their children to other districts.

Last year's passage by district voters of a tax levy increase that allows it to offer some of the highest salaries for teachers in the area will help the district recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. This should greatly improve student performance which will help the district regain full accreditation.

Because of this improvement to the bill for most of my legislative district I voted present on the bill instead of no. However, on final passage of a bill that requires a majority of the entire House, a present vote or an absence has the same practical effect as a no vote since passage requires 82 yes votes from the 163-member body.

Rather than allowing parents to transfer their students and state funding for them from districts that are often struggling financially which will make their financial condition even worse and harm their remaining students, a far better solution would be for the General Assembly to make adequately funding public education a much higher priority which would benefit all public school students in the state.

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, Chairman

**Subcommittee on Appropriations - General
Administration**

Joint Committee on Legislative Research

**Special Committee on Public Policy, Ranking
Minority Member**

Consent and House Procedure

Crime Prevention and Public Safety

Special Committee on Election Contests

**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,



KCMO Police Chief Stacey Graves, shown here with me and other members of the Missouri House from the Kansas City area, took the time last week to visit the Capitol to introduce herself to legislators who hadn't met her and discuss law enforcement in KCMO.



Representative Mike Haffner, R-Pleasant Hill, joined me at the March 13 well attended meeting of the South Kansas City Alliance at the South Patrol Police Campus to discuss legislation each of us have sponsored during this year's session of the General Assembly.

WEEKLY CAPITOL UPDATE

Wednesday, March 15th, 2023

COURT STRIKES DOWN MO GUN LAW

A federal district judge on March 6 ruled that a 2021 state law declaring many federal gun laws and regulations unenforceable in Missouri “is invalidated as unconstitutional in its entirety” for violating the U.S. Constitution’s Supremacy Clause, which holds that federal laws trump contrary state laws.

The General Assembly enacted Senate Substitute for Senate Committee Substitute for House Committee Substitute for House Bills 85 & 310 nearly two years ago over the objections of many Democratic legislators.

The legislation purported to nullify federal laws and regulations:

- Requiring registration or tracking of firearms, firearm accessories or ammunition or their owners;**
- Forbidding possession, ownership, use or transfer of a firearm, accessory or ammunition by law-abiding citizens; or**
- Ordering confiscation of firearms, accessories or ammunition from law-abiding citizens.**

The measure also provided that any political subdivision or law enforcement agency that employs a law enforcement officer who knowingly enforces or attempts to enforce these laws and regulations may be sued by persons arrested or convicted for violating them and will be subject to a civil penalty of \$50,000 per occurrence plus attorney’s fees and court costs.

Plus, any political subdivision or law enforcement agency that knowingly employs an individual in any capacity who enforced or attempted to enforce any of the targeted measures or who gave material aid and support to enforcing or attempting to enforce these laws and regulations will also be subject to a civil penalty of \$50,000 for each such employee hired. Any resident of the subdivision or within the agency's jurisdiction is authorized to file such a legal action.

Shortly after Gov. Mike Parson signed the measure into law, many Missouri police departments began withdrawing from joint enforcement task forces with federal agencies and stopped sharing information about certain gun crimes with federal officials. Critics say the law, dubbed the "Second Amendment Protection Act" by its supporters, has contributed to an increase in violent crime in Missouri by stifling criminal investigations.

Ruling in a legal challenge brought by the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. District Judge Brian Wimes of the Western District of Missouri said the legislation clearly interferes with federal officials' ability to enforce federal firearms regulations, in violation of the Supremacy Clause, and is "invalid, null, void, and of no effect."

"SAPA's practical effects are counterintuitive to its stated purpose," Wimes wrote. "While purporting to

protect citizens, SAPA exposes citizens to greater harm by interfering with the Federal Government's ability to enforce lawfully enacted firearms regulations designed by Congress for the purpose of protecting citizens within the limits of the Constitution."

Wimes issued an order prohibiting "any and all implementation and enforcement" of the legislation.

His order also said Missouri police may resume cooperating with federal investigations, participating in joint task forces and sharing information without fear of the legislation's penalties

Missouri Attorney General Andrew Bailey said he intends to appeal the decision, *United States v. State of Missouri*, to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

HOUSE OKAYS SCHOOL OPEN ENROLLMENT

The House of Representatives on March 8 voted 85-69 to send controversial legislation to the Senate aimed at making it easier for students to transfer to neighboring public school districts without paying tuition. The bill received just three more "yes" votes than the constitutional minimum required to advance.

For the most part, Missouri law historically has required students to attend the local public school district in which they reside, although in some instances students can enroll in another district if they pay tuition.

House Bill 253 would allow districts to voluntarily accept students who live elsewhere starting with the 2024-2025 school year. Although transferring students wouldn't pay tuition, their share of per-pupil state funding would follow them to their new districts.

Supporters of the bill say it would give students in struggling districts more public school options and spark competition among districts. Opponents contend districts often struggle due to a lack of sufficient funding and that allowing students – and their state funding – to move to another district will only worsen the problem.

Districts are allowed to limit the number of their students who may transfer to a district they don't live in to a maximum of 3% of the prior school year's enrollment.

Passage of the bill came one day after the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education released its latest periodic performance assessment of the state's public schools.

Under a new and more stringent evaluation system, instead of just five school districts being deemed provisionally accredited – a step below full accreditation – now more than 100 are in the provisional category.

I greatly appreciate the bill's sponsor agreeing to my request to allow the provisionally accredited Hickman Mills School District that includes most of my legislative district to block any transfers of its students for the 2024-25 and 2025-26 school years which should give it time to regain full accreditation which is expected to greatly diminish the number of district families who wish to transfer their children to other districts.

Last year District voters overwhelmingly approved a major property tax levy increase for the District that allows it to offer some of the highest salaries for teachers and other essential personnel on the Missouri side of the metropolitan area. Being able to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers should greatly improve classroom instruction.

HOUSE VOTES TO CONTROL HIGHWAY SPENDING

The Missouri House of Representatives on March 7 voted 101-45 with 5 legislators voting present to advance a proposed constitutional amendment that would give lawmakers control over how revenue in the State Road Fund earmarked for highways and bridges is allocated. I voted no.

If the measure also clears the Senate, it automatically

would go on the November 2024 statewide ballot for voter ratification.

For nearly a century, the Missouri Constitution has insulated highway and bridge construction decisions from legislative control by giving the six-member State Highways and Transportation Commission which is the governing body of the Missouri Department of Transportation “sole discretion” over how state tax revenue earmarked for highways and bridges is spent.

House Committee Substitute for House Joint Resolution 37 would instead empower lawmakers to allocate that money during the annual budget approval process, thus allowing them to determine which highway and bridge projects receive funding.

HOUSE OKAYS ST. LOUIS POLICE TAKEOVER

The state of Missouri would resume control over the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department under legislation the House of Representatives approved on March 7 by a vote of 113-40 with 3 legislators voting present - just a little more than 10 years after Missouri voters approved by 63.9% a statewide ballot issue in November 2012 restoring local control of the department effective in 2013. I voted no.

The measure, House Committee Substitute for House

Bills 702, 53, 213, 216, 306 & 359, now advances to the Senate for consideration. It would put a five-member Board of Police Commissioners in charge of the department. The governor would appoint four commissioners, with the city's mayor filling the fifth spot, as is done in Kansas City.

The state's first takeover of the department occurred at the Civil War's outset when Missouri's secessionist governor sought to limit the power of pro-Union St. Louis City officials and suppress the city's Black population.

The legislation's supporters contend putting the department back under state control is necessary to reduce violent crime in the city.

Opponents of the bill note that when the state previously controlled the department there were several periods when crime was worse than it is now.

They also point out that violent crime rates also are up in Kansas City, where the police department is state controlled, as well as in many other Missouri cities with local police control and note that the recent increase in violent crime in many cities in the state has coincided with the weakening of the state's gun laws.

BILL LIMITING TRANSGENDER CARE STALLS

Legislation to restrict medical treatment for transgender children is stalled in the Missouri Senate – at least for now – after minority Democrats spent two days filibustering the measure, and majority Republicans fractured on a compromise aimed at breaking the impasse.

The situation resulted in the Senate unexpectedly adjourning on March 8, a day before lawmakers were scheduled to begin their annual spring recess. The Senate will reconvene March 20.

Senate Bill 49 is one of many bills filed in the Missouri General Assembly this year targeting transgender children, their families and medical providers and is part of a national push to suppress LGBTQ rights.

The bill would prohibit doctors and other health care providers from providing any gender-affirming care to those under age 18. Those deemed in violation could face the loss of their state-issued medical license.

A bipartisan group of lawmakers had sought a compromise that would have somewhat softened the bill's restrictions, and for a while it appeared a compromise had been reached. The deal fell apart, however, when conservative hardliners had second

thoughts and refused to support it.

The bill likely will come up again when lawmakers return for the final eight weeks of the 2023 legislative session.

★ ★ **EARLY VOTING** ★ ★



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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!**