



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
LISA DURNELL
154TH DISTRICT

Committees
Agriculture
Special Committee on Tourism



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March 2, 2026

Dear Constituents,

It seems like the past month of the legislative session has gone by way too fast as I have worked hard to represent our shared values in Jefferson City. Over the past month, I have stood up against compact agreements that cede our state's sovereignty to unelected bureaucrats from other states, introduced legislation to ban cashless facilities, and presented legislation to designate the Jerrad Bennett Memorial Bridge.

I want to take a moment to speak about compacts. A compact is a method by which a committee composed of several members, including members from other states, can create the licensing requirements recognized in our state. I am firmly opposed to these compacts because they cede our state's sovereignty to bureaucrats without the consent of the people of our state. I was proud to stand up and vote no on these compacts. Despite my opposition, these compact agreement bills to license dietitians, athletic trainers, teachers, and dental hygienists passed the Missouri House. I want to make clear that I am in favor of license reciprocity. License Reciprocity does not cede our sovereignty and would ensure that our military families can practice their profession when they move to the State of Missouri.

Now that we have touched on legislation I opposed, I also want to mention a bill I introduced. House Bill (HB) 3256, which would ban cashless venues in the State of Missouri. It is my firm belief that the people of our state should not be forced to use a card when they attend a sporting event. This bill would ban these cashless venues and ensure that cash could be used at all facilities in the state. HB 3256 was referred to the Special Committee on Tax Reform, and I expect the hearing on this bill to take place in the next couple of weeks.

On a personal note, I had the honor of presenting my bill, HB 2845, to the Special Committee on Tourism. This bill is in honor of one of my constituents who tragically lost his life way too soon. This bill will designate a bridge on Highway 63 in Willow Springs as the "Jerrad Bennett Memorial Bridge." The greatest honor I have as your representative is carrying legislation that matters to you, and it was a great privilege to present this bill to the committee. I am also happy to report that the bill received unanimous support from the committee.

It is an honor to serve you, the citizens of District 154, in the Missouri House of Representatives. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of service to you.

Missouri State Capitol News

House Advances Constitutional Limits on Government Spending and Tax Growth

The Missouri House has approved [HCS HJR 169](#), a proposed constitutional amendment that would place new limits on how quickly state and local government revenue and spending can grow. If ultimately approved by voters, the measure would require voter approval before most tax increases, extensions of expiring taxes, or certain government debt obligations could take effect. Under the proposal, revenues collected above established limits would generally be returned to taxpayers unless voters authorize governments to retain the funds. The amendment also requires clearer public notice before local tax or bond elections and establishes reserve fund requirements intended to prepare governments for economic downturns or emergencies. This measure would serve as a long-term taxpayer protection designed to promote transparency and fiscal restraint, but some have cautioned the limits could restrict flexibility during periods of rapid growth or unexpected need. By a vote of 87-49, the proposal now moves to the Senate before potentially appearing on a statewide ballot if passed.

House Passes Supplemental Budget to Fund Current State Operations

House lawmakers approved [HCS HB 2014](#), Missouri's supplemental budget bill, providing additional funding to state agencies and programs for the remainder of the current fiscal year. Supplemental budgets are used to cover costs that exceed original projections, including program expenses, grant obligations, and required fund transfers. The legislation appropriates approximately \$3.1 billion for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026. The measure now awaits Senate consideration.

Five-Year Vehicle Registration Option Moves Forward

Legislation designed to simplify vehicle registration for Missouri drivers advanced out of the House this week. [HB 2189](#) allows eligible vehicles less than six model years old to register for up to five years at one time beginning in 2027, provided owners pay registration fees upfront and meet documentation requirements, instead of the current one or two year options. The proposal also eliminates Missouri's current system requiring certain vehicles to renew registration based on model year. The change would reduce trips to license offices, streamline renewals, and make vehicle ownership more convenient for Missourians.

House Approves Property Tax Assessment Reforms

In response to ongoing concerns about rising assessments, the House approved [HCS HB 2178](#), which revises procedures used when valuing certain commercial and industrial properties. The legislation shifts the burden of proof

to assessors when computer-assisted valuation methods are used and requires a physical inspection before assessments can increase beyond a specified threshold. It also establishes deadlines for resolving reassessment appeals and allows taxpayers who successfully challenge valuations in certain cases to recover costs and attorney fees. Supporters say the proposal improves transparency and predictability for property owners, while critics argue it does not address situations where assessments should decrease.

House Votes to Make School Athletics Participation Policy Permanent

The House voted to remove the expiration date on Missouri's existing policy governing participation in school athletic competitions under [HCS HB 1663, 1607 & 1973](#). Current law requires students to compete on teams designated for their biological sex, as listed on their official birth certificate, with an exception allowing female students to compete on male teams if no comparable female team is offered. That provision was set to expire on August 28, 2027. The bill removes the expiration date, making the policy permanent. Supporters argue that maintaining separate teams for boys and girls preserves fairness in competition and protects opportunities for female athletes. Opponents contend the policy is discriminatory toward transgender students and say it could further marginalize a small group of youth who want to participate in school activities. Following House approval with a vote of 98-37, the measure now moves to the Senate for consideration.

House Passes Student Personal Expression Protections in Schools

The Missouri House has passed [HCS HB 2682](#), which renames the Missouri Student Religious Liberties Act as the "Missouri Safeguarding Personal Expression at K-12 Schools (SPEAKS) Act." The legislation expands existing protections to cover political and ideological speech in addition to religious expression by public school students. Schools would be prohibited from discriminating against student clubs based on their viewpoints, and clubs may require members to follow the organization's beliefs and standards of conduct. The bill clarifies that schools may still restrict speech not protected by the First Amendment or conduct that substantially disrupts school operations. Students or organizations who believe their rights were violated could pursue legal action or raise violations as a defense in disciplinary proceedings. The goal is to ensure students can openly express differing viewpoints, but opponents raised concerns about potential litigation costs and challenges for schools enforcing policies. The measure now moves to the Senate following a House vote of 99-47.

Teacher Licensing Compact Aims to Ease Workforce Shortages

The Missouri House has passed [HB 2274](#), legislation adding Missouri to the Interstate Teacher Mobility Compact. The compact allows licensed teachers from participating states to receive a comparable Missouri teaching license following an equivalency review. The bill also creates an expedited pathway for military service members and eligible military spouses seeking licensure. Member states would share licensing and disciplinary information through a national commission overseeing the agreement. This proposal will help address teacher shortages and

improve recruitment by making it easier for educators to relocate. Missouri already maintains reciprocity agreements but the compact should help create a more consistent, nationwide system. With a vote of 133-13 in the House, the bill now heads to the Senate for further consideration.

Statewide Regulation of Tobacco and Vapor Products Advances

With a vote of 93-43, the House passed [HCS HB 2085](#), which would place primary authority for regulating tobacco, alternative nicotine, and vapor products at the state level. The legislation limits future local ordinances that impose standards or licensing requirements beyond state law, though previously enacted local rules would remain in effect. Consistent statewide regulations reduce confusion for retailers operating across multiple communities. Opponents say the measure limits local governments' ability to address public health concerns specific to their areas.

Ballot Language Changes Seek Greater Tax Transparency

[HCS HB 1790](#) received House approval with the goal of making tax-related ballot questions easier for voters to understand. The legislation requires taxation measures to be labeled numerically or alphabetically rather than with descriptive titles and mandates clearer disclosure of the financial impact of property tax changes based on home value. Supporters say the proposal promotes neutrality and transparency in ballot wording so voters can better evaluate tax proposals. The measure now awaits Senate consideration.

Sales Tax Exemption Updates Approved

The Missouri House has passed [HCS HB 1883](#), which updates state sales tax exemptions related to certain medical equipment and auction sales. The bill removes outdated statutory language tied to a 1980 federal definition and expands the exemption for wheelchairs to include accessories. It also exempts most used items sold at auction from sales tax, excluding titled vehicles and boats. Supporters say the legislation clarifies inconsistent rules governing auction transactions and modernizes state law. Opponents expressed concern that the changes could reduce revenue for local governments. The measure now moves to the Senate after passing with a vote of 98-36.

Athletic Trainer Compact Approved by House

[HB 1844](#) establishes an interstate compact allowing licensed athletic trainers to practice across participating states without obtaining additional licenses. The agreement creates shared licensing standards and oversight through a national governing commission. Supporters say the compact will improve access to athletic trainers, particularly in rural communities, and assist military families who frequently relocate. Missouri practice standards would remain in effect for out-of-state professionals working here.

Outdoor Advertising and Highway Signage Changes Advance

The House approved [HCS HB 2145](#) making several adjustments to outdoor advertising regulations. Beginning in 2026, city limit signs along state highways would include population figures. The bill also exempts certain school and nonprofit athletic facility signage from permitting requirements and allows some businesses to place signs across nearby highways without associated permit fees. This measure helps small businesses improve visibility, but some expressed concerns related to safety and fairness in fee exemptions. Following a vote of 142-2, the legislation now moves to the Senate.

Judge Orders Revisions to Ballot Language on Proposed Constitutional Amendment

A Cole County judge has ordered changes to the ballot summary of a proposed constitutional amendment that would make it more difficult for Missourians to amend the state constitution through citizen initiative petitions. HJR3 is the state constitutional amendment proposed by lawmakers that would change the state's initiative petition process that was passed in the Second Extraordinary Session held over the summer of 2025.

Judge Daniel Green of Cole County ruled that the first three bullet points in the ballot language of HJR 3 must be removed, finding they were misleading because they referenced provisions already in state law, including bans on foreign campaign contributions and penalties for signature fraud. The court determined that the summary did not clearly present the proposal's primary purpose until the fourth bullet point.

The proposed amendment, passed by lawmakers during last fall's special session, would require citizen-led constitutional amendments to receive both a simple majority statewide and a majority vote in all eight of Missouri's congressional districts in order to pass. Currently, such amendments require only a simple statewide majority. The change would apply only to citizen initiative petitions and would not affect constitutional amendments referred to the ballot by the General Assembly. Missouri is one of 24 states that allows citizen initiative petitions, which have been used in recent years to enact measures on issues such as abortion policy, recreational marijuana, minimum wage increases, and paid sick leave.

Missouri Observes Severe Weather Preparedness Week Following Deadly 2025 Storm Season

Missouri Severe Weather Preparedness Week will be observed March 2–6, 2026, following the deadliest year for tornadoes in the state since 2011. The National Weather Service reports 16 Missourians died due to tornadoes in 2025, along with three flooding deaths and one fatality caused by a severe thunderstorm. It marked the highest tornado-related death toll since the devastating 2011 Joplin EF-5 tornado. Missouri also experienced five federally declared major disasters in 2025, more than any other state. State Emergency Management Agency Director Jim Remillard urged residents to take preparedness seriously and ensure every household member understands how to respond to severe weather threats.

As part of preparedness efforts, Missouri's annual Statewide Tornado Drill will take place at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, March 4. During the drill, NOAA Weather Radios set to receive Routine Weekly Tests will issue an alert, and outdoor warning sirens will sound in participating communities. Schools, businesses, and families are encouraged to practice

taking shelter in an interior room on the lowest level of a sturdy structure. Each day of the week will highlight a different safety focus, including receiving weather information, lightning safety, tornado safety, hail and wind safety, and flood safety. Additional preparedness resources are available through Missouri’s “Ready in 3” program and the state’s StormAware website.

House Advances Comprehensive Property Tax Reform

The House passed [HCS HBs 2780 & 2668](#), comprehensive property tax reform legislation modifying how tax measures are presented to voters, how property is assessed, and how levy adjustments are calculated. The bill requires clearer ballot language for property tax questions, prohibits describing proposals as “no tax increase” measures, and mandates that ballot language display the estimated cost in dollars based on property value. Most property tax issues must appear on the November general election ballot. The legislation updates assessment procedures, including requiring a physical inspection before certain property values may increase by more than 15 percent. It defines “true value in money” as replacement cost and ensures levy changes remain revenue neutral under the Missouri Constitution. The bill strengthens homestead credit protections by eliminating annual reapplication requirements for eligible seniors and requiring consistent application of credits. Additional provisions allow installment payment options in township counties and adjust school district levy requirements beginning in the 2026-27 school year.

House Advances Personal Property Tax Calculation Reform

[HB 1766](#) modifies how increases in personal property valuations are treated for property tax purposes. Beginning January 1, 2027, aggregate increases in personal property valuation over the previous year may not be counted as “new construction and improvements” when calculating adjustments for political subdivisions. Supporters state the change prevents year-over-year valuation growth from being used to justify higher tax rate calculations tied to new construction factors.

House Passes Sentencing Reform Legislation

The House approved [HCS HBs 2637 & 3155](#), modifying sentencing laws and parole eligibility requirements for certain offenses. The bill expands the definition of “dangerous felony,” removes certain age thresholds for specified offenses, and clarifies that offenders convicted of a dangerous felony must serve 85 percent of their sentence before becoming eligible for parole. The legislation establishes new minimum prison term percentages based on felony classification and increases minimum prison terms for certain rape offenses. It also revises jail time credit procedures by requiring courts to record and pronounce credit for time served at sentencing and repeals certain provisions allowing sentence reductions for eligible offenders.

House Passes Juvenile Certification and Reporting Reform

The House passed [HB 2498](#), modifying procedures related to juvenile certification and reporting requirements in serious cases. The bill narrows fingerprinting requirements to specified felony-level offenses and requires juvenile officers to consult with prosecuting attorneys in cases where certification as an adult is possible. The legislation authorizes certification hearings upon motion by the prosecuting attorney or Attorney General serving as special prosecutor and expands reporting of adjudication and custody information to the central repository. Criminal justice agencies will have access to this information through the Missouri Uniform Law Enforcement System for the administration of justice.

House Approves MO HealthNet Work Requirement Amendment

The House passed [HCS HJR 154](#), proposing a constitutional amendment that would require the MO HealthNet Division within the Department of Social Services to implement work requirements for certain individuals receiving medical assistance, subject to voter approval. Applicants would be required to demonstrate compliance prior to enrollment and maintain compliance to remain eligible, with documentation required for exemptions. The resolution prohibits adoption of additional federal exemptions unless authorized by state law and modifies statutory provisions related to eligibility and federal funding participation.

House Passes Antisemitism Definition and Protections in Education

The Missouri House approved [HB 2061](#) by a vote of 109-21, defining “antisemitism” in state statute and requiring public schools and institutions of higher education to incorporate the definition into their codes of conduct. Antisemitic conduct must be prohibited in the same manner as race-based discrimination, and existing nondiscrimination protections are reaffirmed. Title VI coordinators at the State Board of Education and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education must monitor complaints and submit annual reports to the General Assembly. The bill protects political and religious speech under the First Amendment and prohibits institutions from creating registries based on protected religious or political views.

Video Lottery Terminals and Illegal Gaming Enforcement Approved

The House advanced [HCS HB 2989](#), establishing the “Missouri Video Lottery Regulatory Act” to create a regulatory framework for video lottery terminals (VLTs). The bill authorizes the State Lottery Commission to license manufacturers, distributors, operators, and retailers and oversee a centralized control system. Operators would pay a 31 percent tax on adjusted gross gaming revenue, with funds directed to public education and a new school construction and rehabilitation fund. An additional 3 percent tax would go to local governments. The measure also strengthens enforcement against illegal gaming and increases the excursion gambling boat admission fee, with additional revenue directed to the Missouri Veterans Commission.

Vehicle Inspection Reform Approved by House

The House passed [HCS HBs 1838, 1692, 1695, 1983, 2036, 2662 & 2743](#), which would eliminate Missouri’s safety inspection requirement beginning January 1, 2027, for noncommercial motor vehicles and certain low-use farm vehicles. Inspection requirements remain in place for rebuilt salvage vehicles. The bill removes the requirement that used vehicles be inspected immediately prior to sale and allows licensed motor vehicle dealers to conduct certain

inspections for out-of-state vehicles. Supporters state the change reduces costs for families while maintaining enforcement authority for unsafe vehicles.

Construction Regulations and Development Timelines Modified

The House passed [HCS HB 2384](#), limiting the authority of counties and municipalities to impose certain energy-related construction requirements beyond those authorized in state law when such standards affect housing affordability. The bill also restricts political subdivisions from prohibiting certain residential buildings under six stories in specified circumstances. The legislation establishes a 30-day deadline for approval or denial of development applications, with requests deemed approved if no action is taken. Written explanations are required for denials, and applicants must be notified if submissions are incomplete. The measure now heads to the Senate.

House Advances Reforms to Multiple Employer Health Plans

The House passed [HCS HB 2596](#), modifying state law governing multiple employer self-insured health plans. The bill expands eligibility to include arrangements created for two or more self-employed individuals, each with at least one common-law employee. The legislation updates reporting and financial requirements, including risk-based capital reporting and increased surplus account thresholds. Supporters state the bill strengthens oversight while preserving comprehensive coverage options for small businesses.

House Advances Franchise Employer Liability Clarification

[HB 1644](#) clarifies that a franchisee and the franchisee's employees are not considered employees of the franchisor unless the franchisor exercises direct and immediate control over hiring, termination, discipline, and supervision. Supporters state the bill aligns state law with federal standards and reduces legal uncertainty while maintaining appropriate liability structures.

House Approves Consumer Licensing Fund for Division of Finance

The House passed [HB 2423](#), establishing the "Consumer Licensing Fund" to support the Division of Finance. The fund will consist of licensing fees collected from regulated entities and will be used to administer laws assigned to the Division.

The bill changes certain financial service providers from registration to licensure status, adjusts fee structures, and updates filing requirements. Supporters state the measure balances operational funding needs while maintaining consistent regulatory oversight.

Alternative Detachment Process for Certain Water Districts

[HB 1917](#) passed the House by a vote of 148-2, establishing an alternative process for detaching property from specified public water supply districts when service is not being provided. If owners of 50 percent or more of the land sign a petition, a circuit court must hold a public hearing to determine whether statutory requirements are met.

The bill outlines certification procedures and assigns court costs to petitioners. It also requires certain districts with federally backed debt to accept monetary gifts or full payments to retire that debt. The measure now moves to the Senate.

House Passes Intoxicating Cannabinoid Control Legislation

The House approved [HCS HB 2641](#), creating the “Intoxicating Cannabinoid Control Act” and modifying state law relating to hemp and marijuana. The bill requires intoxicating hemp-derived cannabinoid products to be regulated as marijuana under Missouri’s constitutional framework, limiting production and sales to entities licensed by the Department of Health and Senior Services. The legislation grants primary enforcement authority to the Attorney General and establishes penalties for violations. It also strengthens privacy protections for medical marijuana patients and caregivers and addresses potential future federal law changes affecting intoxicating hemp-derived products.

Auditor Releases Report on State Marijuana Licensing Program

A new audit released by State Auditor Scott Fitzpatrick finds Missouri’s marijuana program was launched using an inconsistent and nontransparent license application and evaluation process, contributing to costly litigation and undermining confidence in the system. The report assigns the program an overall “fair” rating and also cites uncooperative conduct from the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services during the audit.

The audit found significant weaknesses in the Division of Cannabis Regulation’s application scoring design, including flaws that compromised the intended “blind scoring” process. Applicants were permitted to create their own unique identifiers for supporting documents, and some used identifiers closely resembling their business names. In a sample reviewed, applicants whose identifiers suggested their identity were awarded licenses at a significantly higher rate than the overall applicant pool. The audit also identified inconsistent scoring practices, including identical or nearly identical responses receiving different scores and some applications receiving points despite failing to meet minimum criteria. From 2020 to 2023, the state incurred more than \$12.5 million in litigation and administrative appeal costs tied to the 2019 licensing process, resulting in dozens of additional licenses being issued.

The report further states that a contractor hired to assist with scoring advised graders to limit written notes, reducing documentation available for review. Auditors found numerous instances of scoring decisions that contradicted established evaluation criteria without explanation. The audit also criticizes the department’s formal response as adversarial and lacking documentation to support claims disputing the findings.

Beyond licensing, the audit recommends improvements in oversight and compliance monitoring of marijuana facilities. It found lapses in required inspections, limited inventory checks to prevent diversion, and gaps in data-sharing between agencies. Additional concerns included the retention of customer data by dispensaries without clear regulatory guidance, limitations in the state’s track-and-trace system to prevent purchases exceeding legal limits, delays in processing business change requests, and issues with the distribution and management of marijuana tax revenues.

As always, it is a pleasure to serve you in the Missouri House of Representatives. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of service to you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa K. Durnell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "L".

Lisa Durnell
State Representative District 154

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