

Capitol Report  
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Dear Friends,

This first month of session has come and gone, and I wanted to give you an update on the goings on here in Jefferson City. I have included some headlines, as well as a clipping from the House Democrats press release highlighting HB 2052, legislation that I've filed to hold drug makers accountable for raising the prices on your prescriptions. Also, please check out the links at the bottom of the screen to my Twitter, Facebook and House of Representatives pages, and follow me to keep up to date with what I am working on for the 14th District.

#### HEALTHCARE NEWS

From the press release: "Making prescription drugs more affordable is the goal of House Bill 2052 sponsored by state Rep. Matt Sain, D-Kansas City. The bill requires the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services to identify certain prescription drugs for which the wholesale cost has increased by 50 percent or more in the previous five years or 15 percent or more in single year. The manufacturers of those drugs would be required to provide justification for the cost increase to the attorney general, who would produce an annual report publicizing the increases."

#### HOUSE PASSES BILL TO BLOCK CONTROVERSIAL POWER LINE

The House of Representatives on Jan. 28 voted 118-42 to approve legislation intended to block construction of a controversial power transmission line across northern Missouri by prohibiting the company pursuing the project from using eminent domain to acquire the property in needs. The measure, House Bill 2033, now advances to the Senate.

The Grain Belt Express line would transmit power generated from wind farms in Kansas across Missouri and Illinois and connect to the power grid in Indiana. The \$2.3 billion project has been tied up in court for years, with the Missouri Court of Appeals Eastern District ruling against the most recent challenge from opponents on Dec. 17. That case has been appealed to the state Supreme Court, which hasn't yet agreed to take it.

Opponents of the project, including Missouri Farm Bureau, say it's unfair for a company to be granted the power to seize private property from unwilling sellers instead of being required to pay full market value. Proponents say that without eminent domain, the project wouldn't be feasible. The House approved a similar bill to block the project last year, but it died for lack of action in the Senate.

#### HOUSE COMMITTEE APPROVES GAMBLING EXPANSION

The House Special Committee on Government Oversight approved legislation on Jan. 28 that would legalize and regulate video slot machines and sports wagering in Missouri. The

measure, House Bill 2088, would also bolster penalties for establishments that offer unlicensed video gambling terminals.

HB 2088 in part targets the proliferation of unregulated video gambling terminals in convenience stores and other establishments. The Missouri Lottery Commission says such terminals are illegal under existing law, a contention the companies that supply them dispute. Under the bill, only machines regulated by the lottery commission would be allowed. Also, wagers on such devices would be subject to taxation, which unregulated machines currently avoid.

In addition, the bill establishes a framework for allowing wagering on sporting events to be offered at Missouri casinos and entertainment districts. The latter would include places such as Ballpark Village in St. Louis and Kansas City's Power and Light District.

The Missouri Constitution generally prohibits the legislature from legalizing "games of chance." However, voter-approved constitutional amendments over the last 40 years have carved out exceptions for charity bingo, the state lottery and gambling in state-licensed casinos.

#### GOVERNOR APPOINTS GOP SENATOR TO TAX COMMISSION

The Missouri Senate is losing a third member to the executive branch after Gov. Mike Parson appointed state Sen. Gary Romine, R-Farmington, to the State Tax Commission on Jan. 27. The Senate confirmed Romine's appointment three days later.

A strong advocate of public education, Romine was chairman of the Senate Education Committee and often teamed up with Democrats against legislation to expand charter schools or allow public funding of private schools. He was first elected to the Senate in 2012 and was scheduled to leave office at the end of the year due to term limits. Tax commissioners are paid about \$110,000 a year; lawmakers make \$35,915 annually.

Weeks earlier Parson appointed a pair of Kansas City Democrats who also were scheduled to term out of the Senate at the end of the year to influential and well-paying state commissions. With Romine's departure, the partisan breakdown in the Senate is 23 Republicans and eight Democrats, with three vacancies. The open seats won't be filled until January 2021, when new senators to be elected in November will take office.

Parson Also re-appointed Will Kraus, R-Lee's Summit, to another tax commission term. Kraus was a state senator with about 18 months left on his final legislative term when first appointed to the commission in July 2017. The tax commission supervises tax assessment and equalization practices in the state.

I hope you find this helpful and informative. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions, comments, or concerns, or if my office can be of assistance to you in any way. And again, please check out the links at the bottom of the email to my Twitter, Facebook and House of Representatives pages. Until next time...

GO Chiefs!

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