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January 25, 2021



Hello Neighbor,

I hope this first Capitol Report from District 14 finds you and your family in good health.

I'm so proud and humbled to be serving our community in Jefferson City, and while these first few weeks in the legislature have been a whirlwind—with heightened security at the capitol and a COVID outbreak that already [shut down the House](#) last week—I'm happy to share that my office has hit the ground running.

Here are a few highlights:

- The 101st General Assembly was sworn in on January 6th
- I've been appointed to the following committees: Legislative Oversight, Emerging Issues and the Special Committee on Small Business
- I, along with several other legislators, [sent a letter](#) to Governor Parson urging him to prioritize first responders in the vaccine rollout, which was [effective](#).

This is the first of many weekly Capitol Reports I'll send out to help you stay informed on what's been happening in the legislature and around our community. If there's information you'd like to see included in these emails or if you have suggestions for content, please don't hesitate to reach out and share your input.

As always, if you need anything, [please contact my office](#).

Take care,



Representative Ashley Aune
District 14 | (573) 751-3618

Legislative Updates

SENATE PUSHES TO NULLIFY FEDERAL GUN LAWS

The Senate General Laws committee heard [Senate Bill 39](#), an effort to prohibit enforcement of federal gun laws within the state, on Jan. 19. SB 39 would do the following:

- Declare invalid federal laws relating to the taxation, registration or tracking of firearms and prohibiting the possession, ownership, use or transfer of specific types of firearms.
- Give those arrested for federal gun crimes the right to sue “any person or entity” enforcing such laws.
- Declare that any federal agent who enforces federal gun laws in Missouri “shall be permanently ineligible to serve as a law enforcement or to supervise law enforcement officers.
- Repeal an existing state law that promotes responsible gun ownership, while condemning the use of firearms to commit crimes (a similar bill was vetoed in 2013 by Dem. Gov. Jay Nixon)

SENATORS SEEK TO BLOCK LOCAL COVID-19 CONTAINMENT

The Senate Health and Pensions Committee on Jan. 20 heard several bills filed by Republican lawmakers that would strip city and county officials of their authority to impose restrictions aimed at limiting the spread of COVID-19. These bills include:

- [SB 21](#), which would prohibit county health boards from enacting emergency restrictions that last longer than a total of 14 days in any two-year period. The bill also would ban any restrictions on the size of residential gatherings.
- [SB 12](#), which would prohibit health restrictions relating to attendance at religious services.
- [SB 56](#), which aims to strip local health departments of their authority to issue orders to combat infectious, dangerous diseases.

To date, there have been nearly 444,000 known cases of COVID-19 in Missouri, including 6,485 deaths. The committee took no immediate action on the bills.

PANEL HEARS BILLS ON LEGAL IMMUNITY IN COVID CASES

On Jan. 19, the Senate Judiciary and Civil and Criminal Jurisprudence Committee

heard two bills on giving legal immunity from COVID lawsuits to businesses, schools, churches and medical providers, despite a lack of pending litigation.

The Senate committee took no immediate action on either [SB 42](#) or [SB 51](#), but expects to advance one or both to the full Senate sometime in the coming weeks.

Unemployment Benefits Overpayment

Has the Missouri Department of Labor (DOLIR) Contacted You about Repaying Unemployment Benefits?



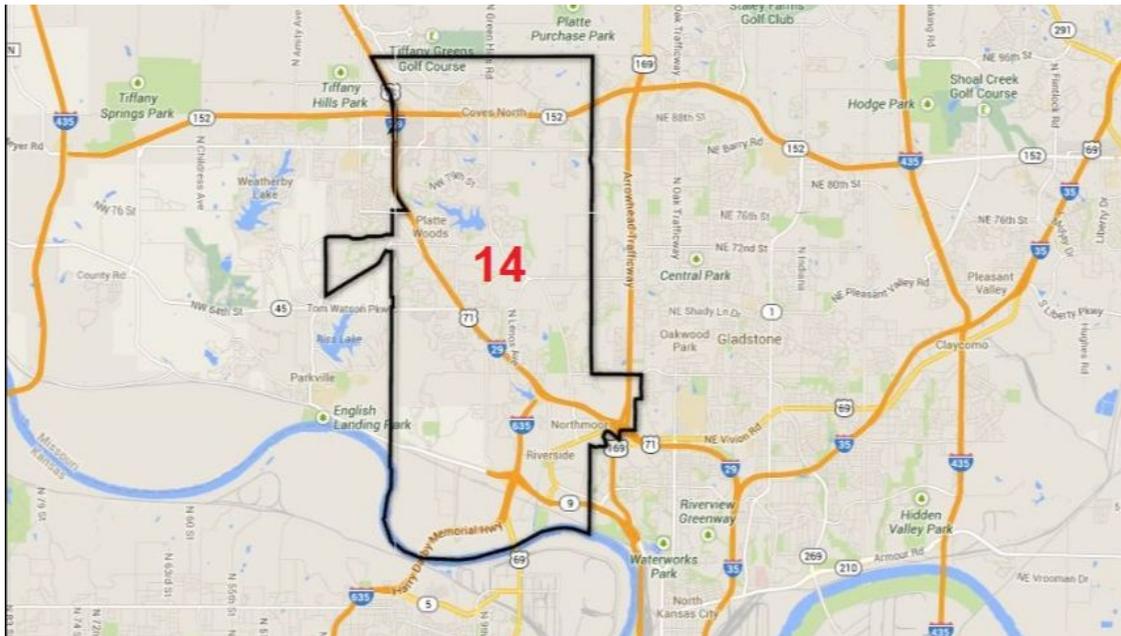
Some folks in Missouri are being asked by the Dept. of Labor to repay unemployment benefits they mistakenly received. While these overpayments were likely non-fraudulent errors on the part of the department, we believe they are requesting repayment at this inopportune time because **they may be required by federal law to recover the overpayments.**

In response, **House leadership is meeting to discuss legislative options for forgiving non-fraudulent overpayments.** This would be the easiest fix for Missourians, but could create additional issues with federal funding and among some in the business community who prefer to keep as much money in the UI trust fund as possible to keep their unemployment taxes from increasing. In the meantime, **here are options you can explore:**

- **You have the right to appeal** to an appeals tribunal within the division.
- In the event there's no legislative fix and you've exhausted your appeal, I encourage you to **enter into a payment plan** with the division of employment security. They accept monthly payments and are typically flexible with those who received non-fraudulent overpayments. This will help you avoid wage garnishment.

If you have any additional questions on how to handle an unemployment benefits issue, [please reach out](#) and my office would be happy to assist.

Around the District



Platte County Health Dept. Asks Residents Interested in Receiving the COVID Vaccine to Complete a Brief Survey

Platte County Health Department has used the 271 doses allotted to us to vaccinate individuals in Phase 1A (Residents and Employees of Long-term Care Facilities; Patient-facing Healthcare Workers; EMS). Vaccine availability has been expanded to individuals in Phase 1B, Tier 1, but PCHD currently has no vaccine in their possession. However, that can change with little advance notice. **To help them prepare, they're asking residents interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine to complete a brief survey:**

If you are a Kansas City, Missouri resident, please use [this survey](#).
If you are a Platte County resident NOT in Kansas City, please use [this survey](#).

[LEARN MORE](#)

Additional Information:

[Platte County Health Department COVID-19 Vaccine Information](#)

[Missouri's COVID-19 Vaccination Plan](#)

Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)

In the most recent federal aid bill, Congress allocated funds for an Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). As of today, federal funds have begun to disburse to states as well as directly to eligible counties and cities. Missouri House Democratic Caucus Counsel and Budget Analyst Casey Millburg has addressed some of the common questions relating to the program:

What Does the Program Do?

ERAP makes available \$25B to assist households unable to pay rent and utilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The funds are provided directly to states and local

governments, which then use the funds to provide assistance to eligible households through existing or newly-created rental assistance programs.

What Can Funds be Used For?

The vast majority of funds received by governments must be used for direct financial assistance, which includes rent, rental arrears, utilities and home energy costs, utilities and home energy cost arrears, and other expenses related to housing. A portion of funds are also available for housing stability services, including case management and other services intended to keep households stably housed, and administrative costs.

Who Is Eligible for ERAP Assistance?

An "eligible household" is a renter household in which at least one person meets the following criteria:

1. Qualifies for unemployment or has experienced a reduction in household income, incurred significant costs, or experienced a financial hardship due to COVID-19;
2. Demonstrates a risk of experiencing homelessness or housing instability; **AND**
3. Has a household income at or below 80% of the area median income.

Priority for assistance will be given to eligible households that include a person who has been unemployed for the 90 days prior to their ERAP assistance application, as well as to households with income at or below 50% of the area median income. Household income is determined as either the total income for calendar year 2020, or the monthly income at the time of the ERAP application. If determined using the monthly income method, income eligibility must be redetermined every 3 months.

Can Homeowners Apply for Mortgage or Utility Assistance?

No. Per federal statute, ERAP assistance can be provided only to eligible households, which the statute defines as households that must pay rent on a residential dwelling.

What Assistance is Available?

Eligible households can receive up to 12 months of assistance, plus an additional 3 months if the administering unit of government determines it is necessary to ensure housing stability and that it has funds available. Funds can be used to cover both past-due and future payments—prioritizing past-due payments. Once past-due payments have been reduced, the city, county, or state distributing the funds can provide future assistance for up to 3 months at a time. Households can reapply for additional assistance if needed at the end of the 3 month period.

Who Can Apply for These Funds?

Either an eligible household or a landlord, on behalf of that eligible household, can apply for ERAP assistance.

How Can Individuals Apply for ERAP Funds?

Cities and counties which have received funds directly from the federal government are responsible for setting up and running their own ERAP application processes. At this time it **does not appear any counties or cities have programs ready**. For units of government which did not receive this direct funding, next week the Missouri House is expected to pass a supplemental spending bill to make ERAP funds available for use more broadly across the state.

How Much Money Was Missouri Allocated?

Allocation was determined based upon the population of states and that state's share of the total population. Missouri's population garnered it \$407.9M in ERAP funds.

Where Can You Go for More Information?

The U.S. Treasury has provided a resource, [available here](#).



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