



## Governmental Services Group

The Missouri General Assembly ended a tension-filled January with a much lighter week of hearings and floor time. On Monday evening the Senate started late, after 5 p.m. and did not stop floor debate until 9:45 AM Tuesday. The all-night filibuster of gubernatorial appointments by the Missouri Freedom Caucus was a political and procedural play to push initiative petition (IP) reform through the committee process. This development cancelled the majority of hearings the following day and has slowed down the committee process.

The deal to approve the Governor's slate of appointees for progress on IPs appeared to be a political win for the Freedom Caucus, but the reality of passing an IP bill through the Senate is not certain, nor is the extra hurdle of voter approval for changes to an existing right to change the state constitution. Meanwhile, the same group is advocating for the resignation of Floor Leader O'Laughlin and Pro Tem Rowden.

The way out of the Senate quagmire is not easy to see, and the must-pass Federal Reimbursement Allowance (FRA) for hospitals is up first on the calendar without a solution to the demands of the Freedom Caucus. The bill does not contain Missouri Right to Life language nor a sunset on the provisions of the bill, which are a part of their demands. There is already talk of a special session on both the FRA and potentially even the budget as politics of a 2024 cycle plays out on the floor of the Senate.

Additionally, the House has begun budget hearings this week. While the business continues against the backdrop of a tense Senate, the House has other issues. Speaker Plocher who has already been under an ethics investigation fired his legislative director on Wednesday, raising eyebrows on whether there was anything under investigation being covered up. There have been members of the Republican caucus calling for his resignation and this is sure to increase.

If there was any question that this would be an interesting 2024, that has certainly been answered in the affirmative. We will continue to keep you all updated on the latest in Jefferson City.

### **Price Transparency**

HB 1837, sponsored by Representative McMullen, prohibits a hospital, or a person or entity collecting on behalf of the hospital, from initiating or pursuing collection actions against a patient or patient guarantor, for debt incurred by the patient on a date or dates of service when the hospital was not in material compliance with federal hospital price transparency laws. This bill had a hearing in the House General Laws Committee this week.

Testifying in support of the bill was the Show Me Institute.

In opposition to the bill was MHA and Mercy.

### **Blood Tests for Pregnant Women**

HB 1979, sponsored by Representative Stinnett, modifies provisions relating to blood tests of pregnant women. Currently, pregnant women are asked to take a blood test at the time of the first prenatal examination, or no later than 20 days after the first prenatal examination, to screen for syphilis and hepatitis B, as well as any other treatable diseases and metabolic disorders as are prescribed by the Department of Health and Senior Services. This bill requires an additional blood sample to be taken, with the woman's consent, at 28 weeks of pregnancy, and expands the list of diseases for screening to include hepatitis C and HIV. This bill was voted out of the House Healthcare Reform Committee DO PASS.

### **Telehealth**

HB 1907, sponsored by Representative Stinnett, adjusts the definition of "telehealth services" under Chapter 191, RSMo, to include audiovisual and audio-only technologies. The term "telehealth" or "telemedicine" shall not be limited only to services delivered via select third party corporate platforms. This bill was voted out of the House Healthcare reform committee DO PASS this week.

HB 1532, sponsored by Representative Buchheit-Courtway, modifies provisions relating to telehealth. Currently, provisions governing a physician's use of telemedicine require that a physician-patient relationship must be established and specify how that may be achieved through telemedicine. This bill modifies those provisions to mandate questions sufficient to gain information as though the medical interview conducted by a physician had been performed in person. Health care providers are currently prohibited from prescribing medication to a patient based solely on an Internet request or questionnaire; the bill specifies that a prescription or treatment based on an evaluation that does not provide the aforementioned sufficient information as though the medical interview had been conducted in person is prohibited. This bill had a hearing in the House Healthcare Reform Committee this week.

In support of the bill was Him&Hers, MHA, Americans for Prosperity, SSM Health, and Associated Industries of Missouri.

In opposition to the bill was the Missouri Academy of Family Physicians, MSMA, and Missouri Association of Osteopathic Physicians and Surgeons.