



## Governmental Services Group

This week the Missouri legislature finalized the House budget before taking it to a floor vote next week. There have been many complaints over how the budget process has transpired, both from Democrats who felt they did not get enough time to properly weigh in on new decision items, as well as the Senate who has griped that the House has spent too much time, handing the Senate the budget with only seven weeks left in session. Ultimately, the roughly \$50 billion budget will head to the Senate with \$200 million less in general revenue funds based on cuts made by Budget Chair Cody Smith. Sen. Hough and the Appropriations committee will have to work in short order to pass a budget by the constitutional deadline and in advance of FY 2025.

The budget, though slightly paired down, does contain a number of major projects. Perhaps the most celebrated item is \$727 million for I-44 improvements. A major component of this project would be six lanes and road, bridge, and infrastructure improvements on the corridor from Joplin to Springfield. Additionally, a bump to base teacher pay from \$38,000 to \$40,000 remains in the budget. This along with infrastructure improvements has been a major initiative by Governor Parson.

Additionally, candidate filing has closed for the 2024 election cycle for state offices. Some will remain open based on some last-minute switches (Speaker Plocher jumping to Secretary of State along with Senator Coleman) which reopens the window. The 2024 election as the backdrop of this legislative session has been the chaos agent that Missouri politics really did not need. The infighting in the Republican majority was already going to be present, but with so many Senators and prominent House members running for higher office the productivity level has remained low. Zero bills have been truly agreed to and finally passed, and thus the Governor has signed nothing into law. Monday, the legislature will be out in observance of Easter, and with the budget and FRA as two must-pass bills there is a finite window to pass anything else major in terms of real policy.

We will continue to keep you informed of the latest in Jefferson City, and we wish you and your families a Happy Easter!

### **Grants for Rural Health Workers**

HB 1925, sponsored by Representative Morse, establishes a grant program for health care professionals working and residing in rural counties. This bill requires the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to, subject to appropriations, establish a rural health care professional grant program that provides incentives for certain health care professionals to practice and reside in rural counties, defined as counties with fewer than 35,000 inhabitants, after August 28, 2024. The Department must post eligibility criteria, contents of the grant application, and procedures and timelines by which health care professionals may apply for grants to enter into a grant agreement with DHSS. Provisions of grant agreements include that the health care

professional must practice and reside in the rural county for a period of five years and a statement of damages to which the state is entitled should the health care professional breach the grant agreement. This bill establishes the "Rural Health Care Professional Grant Program Fund". Moneys in the Fund shall be used solely for awarding grants and administering the grant program. This bill had a hearing in the House Healthcare Committee this week.

Testifying in support of the bill was Missouri Hospital Association, Missouri Academy of Family Physicians, Cox Health, Missouri Association of Rural Health Clinics, Jefferson City Medical Group, MO State Medical Association, Missouri Chamber of Commerce, St. Luke's, MO Nurses Association, and MO Chiropractic Physicians Association.

In opposition to the bill was the Missouri Academy of Physicians Assistants and Independent Colleges and Universities of Missouri.

### **Educational Opioid Pamphlet**

HB 2182, sponsored by Representative Stinnett, requires the department of health and senior services to develop an educational pamphlet on nonopioid alternatives for the treatment of pain. This bill had a public hearing in the House Healthcare Committee this week.

Missouri State Medical Association, Burrell Behavioral Health, and Haleon, testified in support of the bill.

There was no opposition.

### **MO HealthNet**

SJR 76, sponsored by Senator Carter, modifies provisions relating to MO HealthNet. If approved by the voters, this constitutional amendment requires, subject to approval of a waiver, able-bodied adult MO HealthNet participants, ages 19 to 49, to participate in work and community engagement requirements. Participants shall complete at least 80 hours a month of any combination of specified work, education, job search, childcare, and volunteer services. The Department of Social Services shall provide reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities who are not otherwise exempt from the work and community engagement requirements under this amendment to ensure that the participants are able to comply with the requirements, including exemptions, modifications of hours, and the provision of necessary support services.

MO HealthNet participants who shall not be required to comply with the work and community engagement requirements include: (1) those under 18 years of age or 50 years of age or older; (2) those who are medically frail, as defined in the amendment, including those with certain disabilities; (3) those who are pregnant or caring for a child under one year of age; (4) those who are primary caregivers of a dependent child under the age of six or a dependent adult; and (5) those who are also participants of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and are exempt from work requirements under those programs. The Department may permit further exemptions in areas of high unemployment, limited economies or educational opportunities, or lack of public transportation, or for good cause, as defined in this amendment.

This bill was voted out of the Health Policy Committee DO PASS this week.