



State Representative  
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Joint Committee on Public Employee  
Retirement  
Joint Committee on Solid Waste  
Management District Operations

## **WEEKLY CAPITOL UPDATE** **Thursday, April 20, 2023**

*State Rep. Paula Brown*  
*Democrat 87th District*

### **House, Senate differ on plan for expanding Interstate 70**

The House of Representatives has endorsed a \$859 million plan to expand portions of Interstate 70, while a Senate committee instead approved spending \$2.8 billion to widen the entire length of Missouri's central east-west highway from the outskirts of the Kansas City area to the edge of the St. Louis region.

Gov. Mike Parson proposed the less-ambitious version in January when he first presented his state operating budget for the 2024 fiscal year to the legislature. Parson's plan calls for adding an extra lane to I-70 in both directions through Columbia, as well extending its multi-lane stretches from the two main metropolitan areas.

House Budget Committee Chairman Cody Smith, R-Carthage, stripped the governor’s plan from the budget bill for the Missouri Department of Transportation, but promised to include it in a separate legislation providing spending authority for a variety capital improvements projects, House Bill 19. The House on April 20 voted to advance that measure, as well as three other capital improvements spending bills, to the Senate. The four bills collectively authorize \$5.45 billion in capital improvements spending.

A day earlier, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to restore the I-70 project to the regular MoDOT funding measure, House Bill 4, along with expanding its cost and scope. That bill and the other 12 appropriations measures that make up the FY 2024 operating budget now head to the full Senate for debate. Once the Senate approves the bills, negotiations can begin with the House on a compromise FY 24 budget plan.

Because the process fell weeks behind the normal schedule in the House, lawmakers have little time to spare to grant final passage to all of the appropriations bills by a hard constitutional deadline of 6 p.m. on May 5. The new fiscal year starts July 1.

## House approves limiting transgender youths in school sports

Transgender athletes would be prohibited from competing on school-sponsored sports teams that don’t reflect their birth gender under legislation the House of Representatives advanced to the Senate on April 17. The bill passed on a near-party line vote of 106-46, with one lawmaker voting “present.”

House Bill 183 targets sports teams from grades six through 12, as well as college athletics. Public school districts and universities would lose a portion of their state funding for allowing transgender kids to participate on a team that corresponds with their gender identity, while private universities would be subject to fines of up to \$1 million.

A similar Senate bill has already cleared that chamber, as well as a House committee, and awaits action by the full House. In the 11 years since the Missouri High School Activities Association first adopted a policy governing participation by transgender athletes, only a dozen have been cleared to play.

## House narrowly agrees to big increase in license fees

With just three more votes than the constitutionally required minimum, the House of Representatives sent legislation to the Senate on April 17 that would impose another 50 percent fee increase for driver’s licenses and vehicle license plates – just four years after lawmakers doubled the fees. The bill passed on a vote 85-50, with 13 lawmakers voting “present.”

The private companies the state contracts with to operate the license offices charge the fees to pay for their operating expenses and earn a profit. House Bill 424 would increase the fees for a set of two-year license plates or a six-year

driver's license from \$12 to \$18. The fees are in addition to what the state charges for plates or a license, revenue that goes to the state and would remain unchanged by the bill.

## House votes to create constitutional right to hunt and fish

The House of Representatives on April 17 advanced to the Senate a proposed constitutional amendment that would enshrine the right to hunt and fish in the Missouri Constitution. The measure passed on a vote of 108-28, with 13 lawmakers voting "present."

Supporters of House Joint Resolution 20 said it's necessary to protect the rights of Missourians from future encroachment. Opponents said the measure appears aimed at undermining the authority of the Missouri Conservation Commission, the constitutionally independent panel charged with oversee the state's wildlife resources and establishing rules for hunting and fishing.

The House has passed similar measures many times over the last two decades, but the Senate to date has never follow suit. If HJR 20 were to clear both legislative chambers this year, it automatically would go on the November 2024 ballot for voter ratification.

## Bill allowing guns on buses, in churches advances to Senate

Concealed weapons permit holders would be allowed to carry firearms on public transit and in churches under legislation the House of Representatives approved April 17 on a vote of 102-45, with four members voting "present." The bill now advances to the Senate.

Under existing law, concealed weapons are prohibited in certain places. House Bill 282 would remove public transit and churches from the prohibited list. Weapons can currently be brought into churches with the pastor's permission without running afoul of the law, but HB 282 would remove that discretion.

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