



The Good & The Bad

Missouri's 2018 Legislative Session

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Remember, Missouri has 197 members – 163 representatives and 34 senators – in the legislature. (California has 120 members.) Every member may file bills. In a typical session, 1,200 bills result in around 100 pieces of passed legislation.

Budget

The legislature is required to pass the next fiscal year's budget a week before it adjourns in mid-May.

The passed FY2019 budget calls for \$29 billion in expenditures, a third each from federal sources (food stamps, etc.); targeted funds (fuel taxes and such); and, General Revenue: most GR must go to education (43%) and Medicaid (31%). This year, as is common, 70% of General Revenue comes from Individual Income Tax collections followed by sales tax (23%) and corporate taxes (3.5%).

Funding from the three realms has been essentially flat for several years, meaning additional money to fund new programs or major increases to existing operations is impossible. The FY2019 budget assumes that about 2.3% more funding – all from Missouri generated sources – will be received.

Taxation

The legislature may increase revenue without a vote of the people under Article X (Hancock Amendment) powers in the state constitution: a tax increase up to \$95 to \$100 million per year is allowed. This provision has not been utilized in several years.

Tax cuts, however, are a perennial favorite in Jefferson City. The top individual rate dropped from 5.9% to 5.5% and the corporate dipped from 6.25% to 4% due to bills passed last session.

The legislature – reluctantly – placed a fuel tax increase on the November ballot. Ironically, despite a push by the new governor and influential business groups, *the majority* of Republican House members voted against the measure (or didn't vote at all).

Please note that, according to the state auditor, Missouri General Revenue is more than \$4 billion per year below the Article X limit: by legislative action or vote of the people, the state could collect enough money to fund education at traditional levels, cover Medicaid costs and enhance many programs for citizens.

Bad Laws

Utilities

1. Monopoly utilities may adjust rates outside the Public Service Commission rate review.
2. Water companies may increase water rates if the money collected is less than expected.
3. Telephone companies get to choose how their property is taxed, reducing yields to schools.
4. Regulation of coal ash piles near power plants is changed, giving the state more oversight power but possibly (probably) resulting in less accountability and fewer regular inspections.

Workers

1. Ends Merit System protection for most state employees.

2. Ends most Prevailing Wage requirements on most public building projects.
3. Requires state employees in unions to “opt-in” for union due payments from their paychecks.
4. Moved the Right To Work referendum from the November back to the August ballot.
5. Any time a criminal background check is required for a job, an applicant may be fingerprinted. The fingerprints then may go into a national database.

Guns

Gun owners who have been arrested for carrying a weapon into a prohibited place have a streamlined path to get that arrest (and conviction) expunged without harming their gun rights.

Good Laws

Marriage

Sets the minimum age for marriage – in most cases – at 16 years old.

Sex Crimes

Removes the statute of limitations to prosecute sexual offenses against minors.

Health Care

“Out of Network” charges under health insurance plans are limited when the covered person is outside their home area.

Doctors face restrictions in how many doses per week they may prescribe to one person.

Moms covered by Medicaid [half of all births] are eligible for drug addiction treatment for a longer period post partum.

Juveniles

In most cases, young people will be referred to juvenile court until their 18th birthday (from 17).

Hemp

It is now legal, with permits, to grow industrial hemp with ultra-low THC in Missouri. (The new Farm Bill from Congress also makes growing hemp legal.)

Jt Might Have Been

Failed Measures

Whistleblower protections erased in 2017 were not restored.

Court case filing restrictions to prevent certain cases from getting “shopped” to St. Louis and other perceived “Plaintiff friendly” courts did not pass.

More forced arbitration in worker – employer disputes died when it became apparent that arbitration could be used to silence sexual harassment claims.

The “guns everywhere” proposal stopped moving after the Parkland shootings.

Several new restrictions on abortion providers were introduced but did not come to a vote.