

State Representative
Mark A. Sharp
District 37

WEEKLY CAPITOL UPDATE
Friday, December 29, 2023

LEGISLATIVE SESSION STARTS JAN. 3

The Missouri General Assembly's 2024 regular legislative session gets underway Jan. 3, and election-year politics are expected to heavily influence proceedings with several lawmakers making bids for higher office and others maneuvering to strengthen re-election bids.

At least 10 sitting lawmakers are vying for statewide office, while a number of House members are seeking promotion to the Senate. The session ends May 17.

Although until recent years it was standard for the legislature to grant final passage to between 100 and 175 non-appropriations bills during a given session, infighting among majority Republican senators has resulted in fewer than 50 non-appropriations bills being sent to the governor in each of the last three years.

Those disputes, resulting from hardline Senate conservatives holding up legislation in a largely unsuccessful effort to leverage passage of policies that are priorities for them but opposed by most lawmakers, isn't expected to abate in the coming session.

Many Republicans are again expected to focus on "culture war" issues such as prohibiting Missouri schools from teaching about racism in American history and its continuing modern day impact; banning public institutions and private businesses from promoting diversity, equity and inclusion; and further restricting the rights of transgender Missourians.

Members of the majority party also are likely to make a last-ditch effort at making it harder for Missourians to use the initiative petition process to enact laws or amend the state constitution independently of lawmakers. They want new restrictions in hopes of thwarting an initiative drive seeking to enshrine protections for abortion and other reproductive rights in the state constitution. If it gathers enough signatures, the abortion measure will go on the November 2024 statewide ballot. Any restrictions on the initiative process likewise would require voter approval.

Many Democrats are expected to advocate for relaxing Missouri's draconian laws that outlaw abortion in nearly all instances - including rape or incest - and to also seek to reduce violent crime by passing gun safety laws. They also are likely to push for tax relief for working families by eliminating sales taxes on food, feminine hygiene products and diapers.

Republicans outnumber Democrats 111-51 (with one vacant seat last held by a Democrat) in the House of Representatives and hold a 23-11 advantage in the Senate.

The GOP holds over two-thirds majorities in both chambers, so Republicans can override gubernatorial vetoes on straight party line votes. Governor Mike Parson, also a Republican, has yet to have one of his vetoes overridden. Even though the House has voted to override vetoes on several different measures, the override efforts have always died in the Senate.

COUPLE LIKELY WON'T GET GUNS BACK

A St. Louis couple who pleaded guilty to misdemeanor charges for brandishing firearms at anti-police brutality protesters as they passed by the couple's home won't get their weapons back even though Gov. Mike Parson subsequently pardoned them for their crimes, the Missouri Court of Appeals Eastern District ruled on Dec. 26.

The June 2020 incident in which Mark and Patricia McCloskey respectively pointed a Colt AR-15 assault rifle and a Bryco .380 pistol at protesters walking by their house on the way to the nearby home of then-St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson generated national controversy after the St. Louis Post-Dispatch published photographs of the couple menacingly clutching their weapons.

The McCloskeys originally were charged with felonies but in June 2021 pleaded guilty to misdemeanors and as part of their plea agreement forfeited ownership of the weapons involved. Their prosecution was denounced in ultra-conservative political circles, and Parson pardoned the couple about six weeks later.

Days after the pardon, Mark McCloskey asked a court to order the firearms returned, even though the couple had consented to forfeiting ownership as part of their guilty pleas.

A St. Louis judge rejected McCloskey's request, finding that the pardon didn't entitle them to have the weapons back.

McCloskey appealed, but the three-judge appellate panel agreed with the lower court's ruling and - citing a 1976 Missouri Supreme Court precedent - concluded McCloskey remains factually guilty of the crime he committed despite the pardon.

"While we agree that the pardon restored all of his rights forfeited by the conviction and removed any legal disqualification, disadvantage or impediment, Missouri law is unequivocal that a gubernatorial pardon obliterates the fact of the conviction, not the fact of guilt," Judge James Dowd wrote.

"Thus, McCloskey's guilty plea, for which he obtained the benefit of the State dismissing a felony charge punishable by jail time, survived the pardon and importantly, with respect to the issue at hand in this replevin action, triggered the guns' forfeiture. Therefore, since McCloskey's guilt remains, it follows that he is not entitled to the return of the weapons."

McCloskey could further appeal to the state Supreme Court.

The case is *Mark T. McCloskey v. State of Missouri, et al.*

MISSOURI'S MINIMUM WAGE INCREASING

Missouri's standard minimum wage is set to increase to \$12.30 an hour effective Jan. 1 - a bump of 30 cents an hour - according to the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations.

A 2018 ballot measure Missouri voters approved with 62.3% support gradually raised the state's minimum wage from \$7.85 an hour to \$12 an hour over five scheduled increases starting in 2019 and ending in 2023.

As of 2024, the measure requires the wage to be adjusted annually - upward or downward - based on changes in the Consumer Price Index. That adjustment is resulting in the 30-cent bump about to take effect.

The increases imposed by the 2018 law only apply to private sector employees. However, competition for workers has forced many units of government in Missouri to keep pace with private sector wages.

Missouri's state minimum wage is well above the federal minimum wage of only \$7.85 an hour.

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DO YOU QUALIFY? YOU MUST OWN OR CO-OWN YOUR HOME

WE HELP YOU "WEIGH IN" 10 YEARS OLD

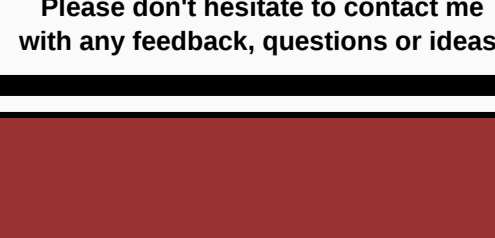
YOU MUST MAKE LESS THAN 60% AMI

1	\$40,680
2	\$46,500
3	\$52,320
4	\$58,080
5	\$62,760
6	\$67,380
7	\$72,060
8	\$76,680

Share the Sun logo and participating organizations: Westside Housing, Center for Neighborhoods, GreenWorld, MRW, CEP, Sierra Club, Central Plains.

South KC Food Pantries

- South Kansas City is fortunate to have several food pantries to help less-fortunate residents have enough healthy food to eat. These include:
- Community Assistance Council**, 10901 Blue Ridge Blvd. on the north end of the Ruskin High School campus, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Persons should call 816-763-3277, ext. 100, or email info@cacck.org for appointments or questions.
 - Red Bridge Area Food Pantry**, 100 W. Red Bridge Rd. in the First Baptist Church of Kansas City, from 10 a.m. to noon on the third Saturday each month. Persons must call 816-908-7800 for appointments by the prior Wednesday.
 - Harvesters** (the community food network) brings the semi-truck that serves as its mobile food pantry to seven sites in south Kansas City monthly to distribute fresh produce and other healthy food to families in need. The sites are:
 - Center School District**, 8701 Holmes Rd., from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. as long as food is left on the first Saturday of the month. Persons should drive through the bus parking lot to the district warehouse. The event is sponsored by Three Trails Community church in partnership with the Center School District.
 - Center District Warehouse**, 8701 Holmes Rd., from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. the second Friday of each month. Persons should go to the entrance to the Center Administrative Office and drive through the bus parking lot to the warehouse where volunteers will load the food. Persons should take the Troost Ave exit. The event is sponsored by the Center Education Foundation in partnership with the Center School District.
 - Evangel Church**, 1414 E. 103rd St., from 7 to 8:30 a.m. the second Saturday of the month. Persons may remain in their vehicles, and food will be brought to them.
 - United Believers Community Church**, 5600 E. 112th Terr., with vehicles lining up at 8:30 a.m. and contactless food distribution running from 9 to 11 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month.
 - Ruskin High School**, 7000 E. 111th St., from 4 to 5:30 p.m. the third Thursday of the month. Vehicles should line up on Ruskin Way on the east side of the school, and staff and students will load the food when vehicles reach the school.
 - Colonial Presbyterian Church**, 9500 Wornall Rd., with registration beginning at 8 a.m. and food distribution running from about 8:30 to 10 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month. Families are asked to bring two cardboard boxes for volunteers to put the food in.
 - Red Bridge United Methodist Church**, 636 E. 117th St., from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the fourth Friday of the month in the church parking lot.
 - Seve and Lift Center - South KC**, 8001 Longview Rd., from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Walk-in, call for an appointment or order online at <https://catholiccharities-kcsj.org/pantry/>.



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Please don't hesitate to contact me with any feedback, questions or ideas!