



Dear Neighbor,

On April 9, Gov. Mike Kehoe signed into law a wide-ranging utilities bill that supporters say is essential for modernizing and upgrading services across Missouri. Critics, however, warn it could lead to significant rate increases for consumers. The new law will take effect on August 28.

Senate Bill 4 garnered bipartisan support and opposition in both chambers of the legislature. It passed the Senate by a vote of 22-11 and cleared the House of Representatives 96-44, with three lawmakers voting “present”.

A central provision of SB 4 allows utility companies to begin charging customers for “construction work in progress” - a shift from current rules that prohibit passing on the cost of building new facilities until they are operational. That longstanding restriction was established nearly 50 years

ago by a voter-approved measure.

The bill also changes how utility rates are determined. Under SB 4, the Missouri Public Service Commission (PSC), which oversees investor-owned utilities, can now set rates based on a company's projected costs in a “future test year”. Traditionally, rates have been based on actual expenses from prior years.

SB 4 also strengthens consumer protections. It expands the existing “hot and cold weather” rules that prevent service disconnections during extreme temperatures. Under the new law, utilities will be barred from disconnecting service within 72 hours of such events, up from the current 24-hour ban.

Additionally, the PSC is now authorized to create customized rate structures for vulnerable groups, including senior citizens, low-income families and other eligible customers.

With just one vote to spare, the Missouri House of Representatives on April 9 approved legislation to legalize, regulate, and tax unlicensed video slot machines, often found in gas stations, bars and other locations across the state. The bill, House Bill 970, advanced to the Senate on an 83-73 vote—just one more vote than the 82-vote minimum required to pass legislation in the House.

The Missouri Gaming Commission, which regulates the state’s licensed casinos, and the State Highway Patrol both consider these devices - known as video lottery terminals (VLTs) - to be illegal under current state law. While some local prosecutors have pursued legal action against VLT operators, most have declined, citing a legal gray area.

Efforts to clarify the legality of VLTs have long divided lawmakers. Some advocate for regulation and taxation, others prefer maintaining the current unregulated status, while another group seeks an outright ban. The narrow margin of the House vote underscores the lack of broad consensus on the issue.

HB 970 would give regulatory authority over VLTs to the Missouri Lottery Commission and require licensing for game manufacturers, distributors, operators and retailers. It would also mandate that the machines be placed in separate areas within establishments and access be restricted to individuals 21 and over.

Despite clearing the House, the bill's future in the Senate is uncertain. Similar proposals have stalled in previous sessions, and although a prominent Senate opponent of VLT legislation is no longer in office, resistance remains. With the legislative session ending on May 16, time is running short for HB 970 to secure final approval.

In a stunning and unprecedented move, the Republican chair of the Missouri House Children & Families Committee on April 9 refused to allow dozens of opponents to testify at a public hearing on legislation aimed at repealing the state's recently ratified constitutional protections for reproductive rights. When some attendees objected to being silenced, the chair ordered security to clear the hearing room.

The decision to shut down public testimony drew immediate and forceful protest from Democratic members of the committee. Despite the uproar, the panel advanced the measure - House Joint Resolution 73 - on an 11-3 party-line vote, with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed.

HJR 73 represents the latest push by Republican lawmakers to overturn Amendment 3, which Missouri voters approved in November to enshrine reproductive rights in the state constitution following the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision to eliminate federal abortion protections. However, internal disagreements among Republicans over how to structure the repeal have led to multiple competing versions of the proposal - five in just over a week - produced by two different House committees.

Controversy also surrounds the ballot language in HJR 73. While the measure claims to "guarantee the right to reproductive freedom", it in fact seeks to completely repeal Amendment 3 and impose a near-total constitutional ban

on abortion. The resolution also includes unrelated provisions to prohibit gender-affirming care for minors.

HJR 73 could come before the full House of Representatives for debate in the coming days. If approved by both chambers, it would automatically appear on the November 2026 statewide ballot for voter consideration.

On April 10, the Missouri House of Representatives passed legislation that would allow concealed-carry permit holders to bring firearms onto public transit—an act currently prohibited under state law. The bill would also lower the minimum age to obtain a concealed carry permit from 19 to 18.

House Bill 328 was approved on a largely party-line vote of 106-45, with two members voting “present”. Republican lawmakers unanimously supported the measure, while nearly all Democrats opposed it.

The bill now advances to the Senate for consideration.

Here is my current list of committee assignments for the 103rd General Assembly:

Special Committee on Urban Issues, Chairman
Crime and Public Safety, Ranking Minority Member
Joint Committee on Capitol Security
Joint Committee on Legislative Research
Revision Subcommittee - Joint Committee on Legislative Research
Consent and House Procedure
Local Government

If you would like to be added to this email or have any questions regarding state legislation or state issues please feel free to reach out to my legislative assistant Mariah Gilmore.

Mariah.Gilmore@house.mo.gov



As the Missouri General Assembly enters one of the busiest periods of the session, bills are often brought up on the floor for approval in no particular order. This means Democratic members must be prepared at any moment to rise and speak on a specific bill or issue. As the Chair of the Urban Issues Committee and the Ranking Democrat on the Crime & Public Safety Committee, a major part of my responsibility is to speak on legislation that has been heard in those committees.



This week, I had the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 1298, sponsored by Representative Holly Jones of St. Louis County. The bill was heard in the Special Committee on Urban Issues, which I have the privilege of chairing. House Bill 1298 mandates cross-training for animal control officers to help them recognize signs of child abuse and neglect. It also establishes a formal reporting mechanism for officers who identify potential child abuse while responding to calls. This legislation is especially important in places like Jackson County, where we've seen multiple cases in which both dog abuse and child abuse occurred in the same household. By equipping animal control officers with the tools to identify and report child welfare concerns, we're adding another crucial layer of protection for vulnerable children in unsafe environments.



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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. Persons should call 816-763-3277, ext. 100, or email info@cackc.org for appointments or questions.

Serve 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/>

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.



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