



Government Advocacy Update

PROTECTING YOUR INTERESTS

April 3, 2017

In order to be responsive to the latest legislative developments, the MSCPA continually monitors proposed legislation. The society utilizes both professional and grassroots lobbyists to ensure the CPA profession has a voice in Jefferson City. By keeping members informed, the MSCPA is empowering you to contribute to the legislative process.

Update provided by Chuck Pierce, CPA, MSCPA government relations consultant

Session Update

Last week, the Legislature returned from its spring break. The House Budget Committee put the finishing touches on the budget bills in committee and advanced several priority bills on the floor. The Senate spent floor time debating a utility bill and made a parliamentary change that will help manage the calendar for the rest of the session. Gov. Greitens signed the bill establishing standards for expert witness testimony.

The 40-member House Budget Committee spent hours working to finalize their version of the Fiscal Year 2018 State Budget. Late Tuesday evening, they finished amendments and voted to pass the 13 budget bills. These bills are expected to be presented on the House floor on Tuesday. The votes to adopt the budget should occur on the floor over the course of the week, culminating with the final votes on Thursday. At that point, the budget goes to the Senate, which will have four weeks left to finish. The Senate is expected to begin reviewing the House budget this week before it is formally presented from the House.

The House also advanced some significant legislation on the floor last week. They voted on measures to establish compliance with the Real ID Act, repeal the prevailing wage, and establish a prescription drug monitoring program for Missouri.

The House took the final vote on [HB 151](#), the bill establishing a Real ID compliant driver's license for Missouri. While it would seem to not be controversial to allow Missourians to choose whether they want to provide the Department of Revenue with the source documents necessary to be compliant, that is not the case. Many members of the Legislature feel that Real ID is a classic example of federal government overreach. Those members would rather fight the federal government or seek a waiver. This controversy held the final vote on the bill for several weeks. Thursday, the bill received the needed votes to advance to the Senate. This debate is even more controversial in the Senate, so a vote there is not expected until late in the session, if at all.

Two other measures that advanced last week in the House also face a tough path in the Senate. The House passed a measure to repeal the prevailing wage on public construction projects. For local government, this is seen as a significant cost-saving, but labor organizations and some business groups fear it opens the door for low-quality contractors to be awarded construction projects. The debate in the Senate is expected to be fierce, and may very well draw a filibuster.

The other issue facing a rocky road in the Senate is the establishment of a prescription drug monitoring program. The House has passed this measure for the last several years, but it has not made it through the Senate. For much of the same reasons as the opposition to Real ID, some senators have been opposed to a state-run database to track prescription drug usage. One of the physician senators in particular has almost single-handedly blocked the passage of this measure in the past. He has filed his own version, which many feel does not do enough.

The Senate began debate of one of its more controversial measures last week. A bill to allow public utilities to build infrastructure replacement costs into their rates has been debated for several years. During the interim, a work group of all stakeholders hashed out what was thought to be an acceptable compromise. This bill came up on the floor last week, and it was clear some senators did not think this was the right direction. This bill is expected to come up again this week and to take up a great deal of time. To manage the debate schedule better, the Senate moved virtually all of its bills to the informal calendar. This allows the bills to be taken up for debate at any time, rather than having to be addressed in order.

Last week, the governor signed [HB 153](#), the Expert Witness Bill. This bill establishes the federal standards for expert witness testimony for Missouri, which places Missouri in line with the majority of states that have already adopted the federal standard. The MSCPA supported the bill and thanks the Legislature and governor for enacting this important measure.

Legislation of Interest

To view a list of high-priority bills the MSCPA is tracking, [click here](#). The following bills had significant activity this week:

[HB 655](#), extending the expiration date of tax credits for donations to pregnancy centers, was voted do pass from the Senate Committee on Economic Development.

[SB 18](#) modifies the law relating to business fees by waiving fees for veterans. The bill was amended on the floor to add SB 183 and was adopted by the Senate. It needs one final vote before it goes to the House.

For Additional Information

This *Government Advocacy Update* e-newsletter will continue weekly through the legislative session. If you have any questions on the MSCPA's government advocacy efforts, please visit the [Web page](#), or contact [Dena Hull](#) at (800) 264-7966, ext. 105.

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