

Missouri Budget Project E-News Federal and State Policy Update January 22, 2010

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1. **Federal health care reform hits major snag.**

With the surprise election of Republican Scott Brown as the new Senator from Massachusetts, health care reform has come to a screeching halt. His election means that the Democrats no longer have the 60 votes needed to stop a filibuster in the Senate. Reform began with fewer than 60 Democratic votes, and it can still be done with cooperation. But it is more difficult.

Reform could move forward without another Senate vote if the House passes the Senate bill without amendment, but House Speaker Pelosi has said the Senate bill cannot be passed in the House.

So efforts could continue to pass scaled down reform through the reconciliation process, or work could begin on a new bill. We have come so far toward making reform a reality that it is imperative to keep the momentum moving forward.

Speak out now to Congress!

Failure to reform health care means that 495,000 Missourians who would be insured under the Senate bill remain uninsured. It means that tens of thousands Missouri seniors fall into the Medicare donut hole each year. It means spirally premium costs for employers and employees. We cannot afford to continue with our current policies. Join in telling Congress that we need to press to the finish line.

Here is what you can do:

1. **Call your Congressperson and our Senators NOW.** Tell them: **Stay strong and exert leadership in bringing health care reform to the finish line. We can't afford to continue with the status quo. Toll free: 1.800.828.0498**
2. **Families USA has an organizational sign on letter.** Please go to www.familiesusa.org

2. **Action Needed! Mega sales tax to get hearing in the Senate**

SJR29 (Purgason) will be heard on Thursday, 1/28 at 8 AM in SCR1 by the Senate Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee. Senator Purgason is the Chair of this Committee. This constitutional amendment eliminates personal and corporate income taxes and replaces them with a mega sales tax. New fact sheets are available on the Missouri Budget Project website. Click here to view these.

It is critically important that opposition to SJR29 is heard from a wide variety of perspectives. IF YOU ARE ABLE, PLEASE BE THERE. Please call or email Heather Lasher Todd at 314.652.1400 or hlashertodd@mobudget.org if you are able to testify.

3. **Constitutional amendments to opt out of health care reform also get hearing**

SJR25 (Cunningham) will also be heard on Thursday 1/28 at 8 AM in SCR 1 by the Senate Government Accountability and Fiscal Oversight Committee. This constitutional amendment is similar to bills filed in at least 16 other states, and its purpose is to short circuit the State's participation in federal health care reform (if it is enacted!).

4. Governor delivered State of State and budget priorities on January 20

Governor Nixon outlined his priorities and proposed budget during an address on January 20. The Missouri Budget Project prepared a summary of the Governor's budget. [Click here to read the summary.](#)

5. Committee hearings scheduled

In the House

The House Committee on Health Care Policy will hold a special hearing regarding health care policy options for children on 2/3 at noon. The Partnership for Children and Missouri Foundation for Health will make presentations. Since no bills are being considered, there will not be public testimony.

In the Senate

Senate Appropriations Committee on 1/25 at 12:30PM in SCR2 will discuss the Governor's FY2011 recommendations, FY2010 Supplemental Appropriations, and statewide issues.

Senate Committee on Health, Mental Health, Seniors and Families will hear 4 bills that propose requiring drug testing for TANF applicants and recipients on 1/26 at 8:15 AM in SCR1. **SBs 615 (Goodman), 607 (Stouffer), 602 (Crowell) and 725 (Rupp).**

Senate Committee on General Laws will hear **SJR23 (Ridgeway)** on 1/26 at 3 PM in SCR1. SJR23 prohibits state funding to political subdivisions that insure employees in a public health insurance option.

Joint Committee on Tax Policy, on 1/27 at 3 PM or upon adjournment in SCR1

Senate Committee on Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight will hear **SJR29 (Purgason)** and **SJR25 (Cunningham)** on 1/28 at 8 AM in SCR1.

6. Budget Forum scheduled in St. Louis

The Nonprofit Services Center is presenting a **Budget Forum** on Friday, February 5, 2010 at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center, 975 Warson Road, St. Louis 63132

8:30-10 AM panel with Ron Levy (Dept of Social Services), Margaret Donnelly (Dept of Health and Senior Services), Ann Perry (Dept of Economic Development), Representative Rachel Storch, Senator Eric Schmitt. Dr. James Kimmey (Missouri Foundation for Health) will moderate the discussion.

10:15 to 11:45 AM- Presentation on the budget by Amy Blouin and panel discussion on becoming an advocate moderated by Cande Iveson.

There is no cost, but space is limited and registration is required. www.nonprofitservices.org. 866-433-9580