

March 16, 2020

*In order to be responsive to the latest legislative developments, MOCPA 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, MOCPA is empowering you to contribute to the legislative process.*

**Update provided by Chuck Pierce, CPA, MOCPA government relations consultant**

### **Session Update**

The biggest news of last week was the decision by both chambers to cancel or reduce legislative activities. Before leaving for an extended break, the Senate made progress on two of its top priorities for the year. The House budget committee stayed an extra day to get the budget in a position to be passed by the House this week.

The Legislature, like all organizations, is responding to the public health threat of the COVID-19 outbreak. In normal times, the Capitol is a melting pot of human interaction. Associations, special interest groups, and school children regularly convene in the Capitol to interact with their legislators. Other members of the public regularly come to the building to testify or advocate for their causes. Add to that approximately 1,000 legislators, staff and lobbyists who work there every day and you have a lot of person-to-person contact occurring in a building that is 100 years old.

The General Assembly took steps last week to try to reduce the levels of public exposure. Leadership in both chambers issued statements encouraging schools and other groups to cancel or postpone any planned trips for tours or advocacy days until the threat has been contained. In a further effort to reduce exposure, both the House and Senate announced reductions in the number of days they would be in session this week.

The legislative spring break is set for March 23-27. On Wednesday last week, the Senate announced they would not meet this week. This effectively closes the Senate for two consecutive weeks.

On Thursday, the House announced a reduced schedule for the week as well. The House is in the final stages of approving the budget. This budget must be voted on in the House first, then it goes to the Senate for its approval. The House set a schedule for this week that basically has members in session and committee meetings only as necessary to finish the budget before spring break.

Before leaving for the week, the Senate made progress on two of the high priority issues of the session where Missouri lags the rest of the country. These are the establishment of a prescription drug monitoring program and the establishment of economic nexus for remote sellers. Missouri is the only state that has not established a prescription drug monitoring program. The legislation has been fiercely debated in the past but could not pass the Senate. That changed this week. The Senate

debated the House passed prescription drug legislation. After several hours of debate, the Senate reached a compromise and passed the bill.

Missouri is one of only two states that has not established a definition of economic nexus for remote sellers (aka a *Wayfair* fix). On Wednesday, the Senate took up [SB 648](#). As expected, the bulk of the debate focused on the allocation of the additional revenue rather than the technical aspects of the bill. The stated goal of the majority of legislators is that any bill passed must be revenue neutral. That means either tax cuts or dedicated spending will have to be part of any bill that passes. Several amendments were initially added but when the price totaled exceeded the revenue estimates, the bill was pulled back. The sponsor then presented a substitute bill with reduced spending and cuts that was more balanced. This caused the bill to be placed on the informal calendar. Look for these differences to be worked out, and the bill to come back up when the Senate returns.

It is not clear at this point what the rest of the session will look like. No one has discussed cancelling it in total, but legislative leaders are committed to taking all reasonable steps possible to reduce the risk of exposure to both members and the public. If the COVID-19 outbreak has not subsided by the end of the legislative spring break, additional reductions in session schedule are likely. The only Constitutional requirement of the Legislature is the passing of the state's budget. If the House completes its part this week, this could be accomplished with a lot of committee work and very little public session work in the Senate.

Because of the shortened schedule this week, and the legislative spring break the next, there will no *Government Advocacy Update* until April 6.

### **Legislation of Interest**

[Click here](#) to view the complete list of high-priority bills MOCPA is currently tracking. The deadline for filing bills has passed, but as they are amended, new bills may be added to the list. Be sure to check the list regularly to look for legislation that may be of interest to you or your clients.

### **For Additional Information**

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

### **Related Links**

- Become a [Legislative Keyperson](#)
- Contribute to [MO CPA-PAC](#)

Click [here](#) to unsubscribe