

# LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS<sup>®</sup> OF MISSOURI

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## **LWV Legislative Bulletin** **February 24, 2020**

*LWV members are encouraged to personally communicate, as individual voters (not as LWV members), with their legislators on the various legislative bills. Previous issues of the Legislative Bulletin can be found at this link: <https://lwvmissouri.org/legislative-bulletin/>*

You can find your legislator(s) at this link: <https://www.senate.mo.gov/LegisLookup>. Although it says “Senate,” it will give you all your state and national elected officials.

### **NO EXCUSE ABSENTEE VOTING**

HB1761 (McGaugh): This is a no excuse absentee ballot bill, carried by a Republican legislator who previously served as a county clerk. The county clerks’ association has endorsed the legislation. Here’s the language that is being proposed to add to current law:

*Any registered voter may vote by in-person absentee ballot, at the location designated by the election authority, for all candidates and issues for which such voter would be eligible to vote at the polling place without providing a reason for the need to vote absentee.*

**We expect that there will be a hearing on this bill on Wednesday, February 26 at 8:00 a.m. in the Elections and Elected Officials Committee, Hearing Room 6.**

**The LWV would be in favor of this bill as it would make it easier for citizens to be able to vote if they are unable to vote on Election Day.**

### **INITIATIVE PETITION PROCESS**

**These bills make it harder for citizens to bring forward and enact relevant policies via initiative petition.**

**The LWV would be opposed to these bills.**

HJR102 (Simmons)

Upon voter approval, this Constitutional amendment modifies provisions for initiative petitions for Constitutional amendments by requiring that the petitions be signed by 8% of the registered voters in each of two-thirds of the state House of Representatives Districts, and changing the required vote for passage of the measure from a majority to two-thirds of the votes cast.

**There is a hearing on this bill on Wednesday, February 26 at 8:00 a.m. in the Elections and Elected Officials Committee, Hearing Room 6.**

The House Elections and Elected Officials Committee met on February 5 and voted to approve the following two measures regarding approval of initiative petitions. Both bills have been referred to the House Rules -Legislative Oversight Committee.

HJR 60 (Billington) to require signature collection for initiative petitions to meet signature thresholds in all eight Congressional Districts of the state, rather than the current requirement of at least six of eight Congressional Districts. This requirement would make an already difficult task much harder to complete.

HCS/HJR 97 (Eggleston) to require the sponsor of any initiative petition proposing Constitutional amendments to collect signatures in every Congressional district and then to submit any approved petition to the General Assembly for consideration in a manner similar to a bill. The legislature would be allowed to interfere with the process by passing, amending or blocking the petition. Only a petition approved by the legislature could be approved by a simple majority. Any version not approved by the legislature would have to be approved by a two-thirds supermajority.

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### **On the Senate Side**

SJR 31(Seder)

Bill summary from the Missouri House website: Under current law, initiative petitions proposing constitutional amendments shall be signed by 8% of the legal voters in each of two-thirds of the Congressional districts. This constitutional amendment, if approved by the voters, requires such petitions to be signed by 15% of the legal voters in each of the eight Congressional districts.

Furthermore, current law provides that initiative petitions proposing constitutional amendments shall take effect when approved by a simple majority of the votes cast thereon prior to taking effect. This amendment requires such initiatives to be approved **by at least two-thirds of the votes cast** thereon prior to taking effect, with the exception that an amendment proposing solely to repeal any amendment adopted through the initiative process prior to December 3, 2020, shall be approved after receiving a simple majority.

This bill was voted “Do Pass” by the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee on January 29.

### **VOTER ID**

HB1600 Sponsored by John Simmons (R) 109, no co-sponsor.

"In essence, by eliminating non-photo IDs, this measure would attempt to reinstate a strict voter ID requirement (similar to one that was found unconstitutional in *Weinschenk v. State*, 203 S.W.3d 201 (Mo. 2006)). It would require voters to show a non-expired state issued photo ID to vote or cast a provisional ballot, that would only be counted if the voter returned with photo ID or if the voter’s signature on the provisional ballot envelope matches the signature on their voter registration."

This bill was voted “Do Pass” by the House Rules – Legislative Oversight Committee on February 11.  
**Members should contact their state representative to oppose this bill.**

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## SENATE ADVANCES ATTACKS ON THE REFORMS OF CLEAN MISSOURI

The Senate passed SS#3/SJR 38 (Hegeman) on February 10. SJR 38 is similar to HJR 76 and HJR 101 and would undermine the redistricting reforms of Amendment 1 (CLEAN Missouri). The SS#3 still removes the nonpartisan demographer created under Amendment 1 and opens the possibility for the population count to be skewed to exclude non-citizen or non-voting-age residents from the data used for drawing districts. The SJR also makes it harder to file suit against a faulty map and limits the remedies available to a judge in such a case.

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The House has a substitute, HJR115, but could approve the Senate resolution without changes.

**The League opposes SJR 38. Contact your state representative to vote “no” on this bill.**

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## EARLY VOTING

Senator Karla May has introduced Senate Bill No. 681 – An Act that Modifies Provisions Relating to Voting in Elections. This act authorizes a person to vote early, for any reason, from the sixth Tuesday before the election until 7:00 pm on the Monday immediately before the election with hours for voting as provided in the act. The local election authority shall establish early voting locations as provided in the act.

This act has had a second read and been referred to the Local Government and Elections Committee.

Our goal is to get all League members to contact his or her senator by email or phone and request/persuade each to co-sponsor this bill.

Here is a sample letter or phone script:.

*Dear Senator,*

*I am writing to request your support for **SB 681 – Modifies Provisions Relating to Voting in Elections.***

*The League of Women Voters strongly advocates for the right and the opportunity for every citizen to vote. We believe the additional days and hours for Early Voting are necessary to fulfill this right. When we say everyone has the right to vote, we must make sure everyone has the opportunity to exercise that right.*

*One of the proposed sections in SB681 is an increase in the number of days the Early Voting Centers would be open from the sixth Tuesday before the election until 7:00pm on the Monday immediately before the elections. On the Tuesday before the election through the Monday before the election, the hours shall be from 8am to 7:00pm. This also includes 11:00am to 5:00pm Saturday and Sunday on the weekend before the election.*

*In addition, we believe it is important for there to be a sufficient number of early voting sites for voters living in the many parts of our cities, towns, and rural areas. We believe a number of early voting sites acceptable to all stakeholders should be staffed and available to voters during the above days and times.*

*The League also believes that there should be no requirement to provide a reason for Early Voting. Any registered voter should be able to vote at an official voting site by providing the ID necessary for any voter on a set election day.*

*“No voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure shall be imposed or applied by any State or political subdivision to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote” VRA, 1965. “Qualified electors of the state who are absent, whether within or without the state, may be enabled by general law to vote at all elections by the people” Article VIII. Sec. 7 Constitution of Missouri, 1875.*

*It is for these reasons that I ask that you vote yes for the passage of this bill so that all Missouri citizens can enjoy the benefit of early voting.*

## **“GUNS EVERYWHERE”**

SB 663 (Senator Eric Burlison, sponsor) A "Guns Everywhere" bill. This bill modifies provisions relating to the concealed carrying of firearms, allowing guns in hospitals, churches, public universities, day care sites, amusement parks, bars, and meetings of local governments, sporting venues. Counties, cities, or other political subdivision are prohibited from establishing no carry zones. Private property electing to ban concealed carry would have to be posted with 11 by 14 signs.

There was a hearing on this on February 13 in the Senate Transportation, Infrastructure and Public Safety Committee.

SB 588 (Senator Eric Burlison, sponsor) This bill is called the Second Amendment Preservation Act. It claims that Missouri does not have to follow any federal law regarding firearms. It prohibits any law enforcement officer in Missouri from complying or enforcing a federal law under threat of termination.

This is on the Formal Calendar Senate Bills for Perfection on --SB 558-Schatz, February 24, 2020.

**Contact your state senator to oppose these bills.**

**LWV would oppose these bills based on the LWV Policy statement on gun control:** *Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.*

## **CHARTER SCHOOL EXPANSION**

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Two charter school expansion bills have been approved by Senate committees and could be taken up soon for Senate debate, perhaps as early as this week. The Senate Government Reform Committee approved SCS/SB 603 (O’Laughlin) on February 3 and the Senate General Laws Committee approved SB 649 (Eigel) on January 28. SB649 is on the Informal Calendar S Bills for Perfection, February 24.

The bills have roughly similar provisions regarding expansion of charter schools. Both bills would allow charter schools to be sponsored by outside entities (other than the local school board) and operate in districts around the state.

Charter schools should be subject to the same standards of accountability, transparency and respect for the rights of students, parents and staff as are applicable to traditional public schools. The League supports criteria for governance and operations similar to those of traditional public schools.

***SB 603 and SB 649 do not enact these reforms. Contact your state senator to oppose these bills.***

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